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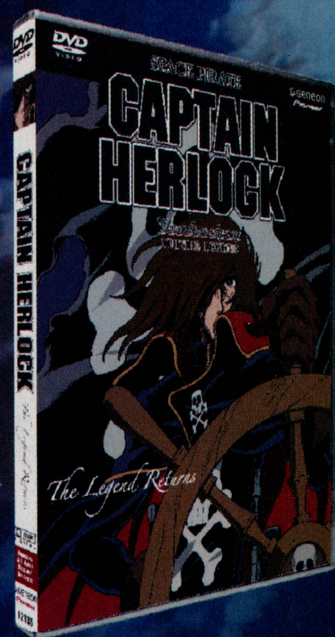
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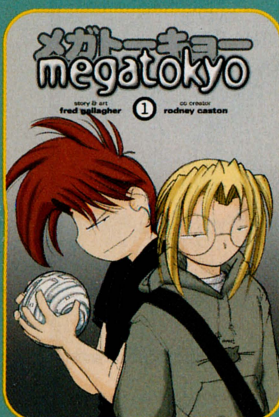


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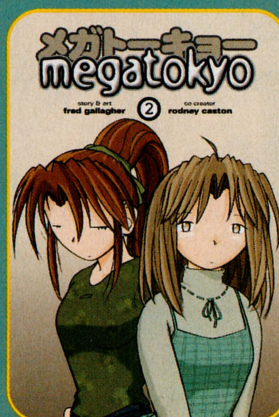
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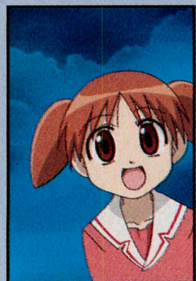


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ON THE COVERS



Shobu from "Duel Masters" wants you to play the newest game craze on page 14 while Chiyo from "Azumanga Daioh" wraps up the school yearbook on page 44.

AZUMANGA DAIOH cover courtesy of ADV Films. Azumanga Daioh © Kiyohiko Azuma / Mediaworks / AZUMANGADAIOH Committee. FLDL © Gainax / KGI • Synch-Point / Production I.G.

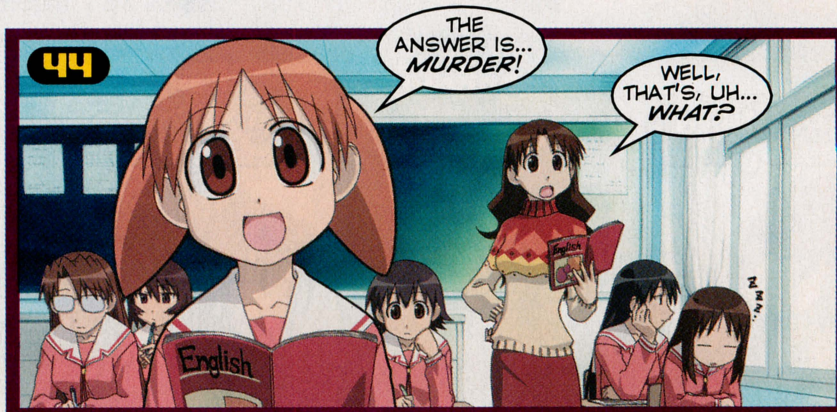
DUEL MASTERS cover courtesy of Wizards of the Coast. © Wizards of the Coast / Shogakukan / Mitsui-Kids. Gundam Seed © Sotsu Agency / Sunrise.

FEATURES

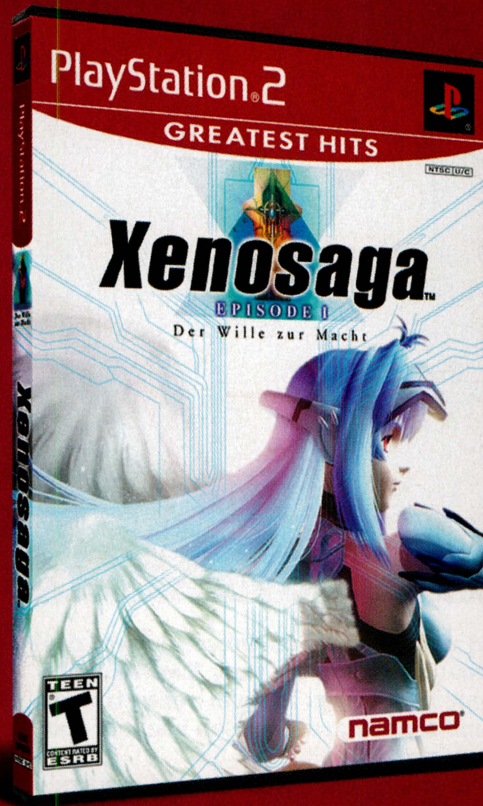
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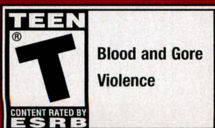
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FROM THE TOP

GREETINGS FROM TOKYO, GAIJIN!



O MY GOD Managing Editor Robert Bricken concludes the East-West anime trade summit with the Big O, in his healthier times.

I think I'm dying.

But this is to be expected when you fly to Tokyo, Japan, deal with the jetlag (it's tomorrow in Japan, as they live 14 hours ahead of America), fly home only three days later in order to maximize the jetlag coming back, and then try to finish an issue of your favorite anime magazine, *Anime Insider*.

That's what I did, and now I'm paying the price. Having returned from our trip from Anime Expo Tokyo, I'm utterly ill as I type this out; my throat hurts, my eyes are yellow, my head is packed full of snot. If your pages stick together, that's my bad. I've been sneezing a lot.

But, it was worth it to go to Tokyo. The Anime Expo there rocked. We saw a ton of new anime, like the badass "Fullmetal Alchemist." We shopped our wallets out, since the Expo was held right next to the 7-floor anime store Animate in Ikebukero. We met the Big O. He was quite pleasant. Very down to earth for such a big star.

Of course, inside that big Big O was Ferio, a professional Japanese cosplayer from Nagaizumi-cho in Japan. Ferio was one of many Japanese fans with astounding costumes; since anime fandom has had so much more time there, Japan has otaku-ism down to a fine science. He, like the other local anime fans, were surprised and delighted to see us American otaku coming over to visit the homeland.

We Americans were delighted just to see all that new anime. I'm particularly glad, since it'll help us judge for next year's Best of the Best, by giving us a head start (even though we just finished this year's ceremony—check it out on page 28). I just hope I'm around for it.

Robert L. Bricken
Managing Editor

MASTHEAD

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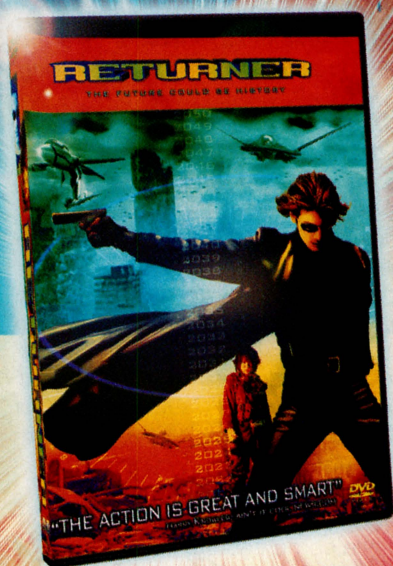
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ANIMAIL!

YOU'RE FANS, YOUR MAIL

▼ You know the deal. This is the part of the magazine where I print your letters and respond with my charming and always-helpful words of wisdom. At least, that's how I like to look at it. Anyway, this month I learned that if there's one thing our readers love, love, love, it's dreaming up casts for live-action anime movies! Several readers met the challenge posed in "Animail" #10 and came up with their own "Lupin the 3rd" casts, while others took it a step further and came up with all sorts of potential live-action projects. But first, a very special clarification...

WAIT A
MINUTE, MR.
POSTMAN!

IS THERE
A LETTER, A
LETTER FOR
ME?

LIKE
THAT WOULD
HAPPEN.



DEAR FELLOW OTAKU,

I was hangin' in Iraq reading *Anime Insider* (in case you're curious, I'm an Army infantryman of the 101st Airborne) and you stated that "Nausicaä of the Valley of Wind" never made it to the U.S. as an English dub. Well, I'm not sure if you're aware of this, but the great movie did in fact become a dub quite some time ago. It was under the title "Warriors of the Wind." I know this because I happen to own it. I've had the movie ever since I can remember on VHS. Now I'm sure it was edited like any good anime that makes it to America, but I just wanted to let my fellow readers out there know you can get it in English...if you can find it, that is.

**Brad Harris
Mozul, Iraq**

Our official position at *Anime Insider* is not to recognize "Warriors of the Wind" as a U.S. release of Hayao Miyazaki's masterpiece "Nausicaä." Not just because it was edited (since it was edited severely, in the manner of most '80s-released anime), but because it was butchered. The rumor mill is that "Warriors" is the reason Miyazaki refused to let anyone bring his other movies to America, until Disney/Miramax promised not to edit "Princess Mononoke."

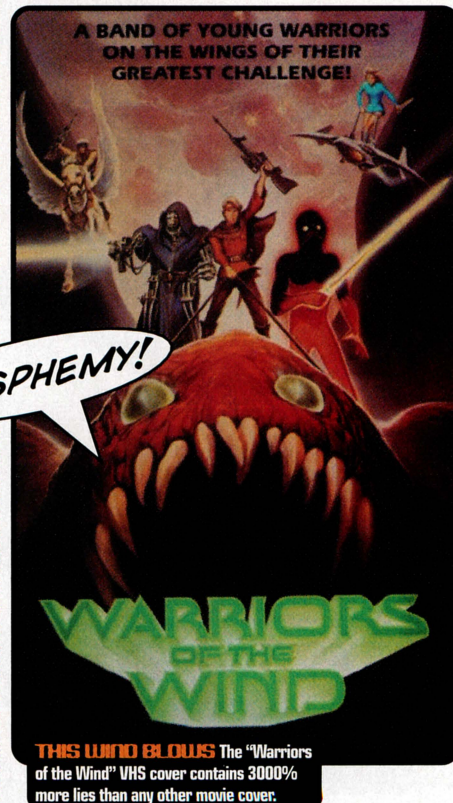
Anyone who believes "Warriors of the Wind" can't be that bad should just look at the cover to the VHS release tape. I'm not sure exactly which atrocity on there is worse, but I'll list the most glaring for those might not have seen the original.

1. Prince Asbel, the fellow in the center of the cover, is not the hero. He only appears in about a third of the film, while lovely Nausicaä does all the work. That would be her, tucked away in the upper right corner, for the crime of being a girl.

2. In the anime, one army resurrects a huge "god warrior" to smite their enemies. Despite what the cover shows, Asbel doesn't get to ride on its head.

3. Nor does a mini "god warrior"—the dark fellow to the right

BLASPHEMY!



of Asbel—join forces with him to fight evil. Or wield a lightsaber.

4. In "Nausicaä," There are no monk robe-wearing, laser-shooting robots. At all.

5. There are also no flying horses. I don't even know who the guy riding him is supposed to be. I think he's another Asbel.

6. In the anime, Nausicaä wears pants.

Never watch "Warriors of the Wind," no matter how bad someone dares you. Just wait for Buena Vista to release the original "Nausicaä" on DVD sometime in 2004. And while we're on the subject of movies...

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

These are some casting suggestions of mine if you haven't already decided.

Lupin: Keanu Reeves (Why not?)

Jigen: Ric Ocasek (Well, they are both tall and ugly!)

Goemon: Jackie Chan

Fujiko: Paulina Porizkova

Zenigata: Sting!

Nicole Wimmer
Independence, MO

Two of Nicole's casting suggestions are married to each other! Can you guess which ones? That's right, the ugly one and the female one. Wow, Nicole doesn't care whose feelings she hurts.

Also: Sting? And why does he get an exclamation point, when no one else does?

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

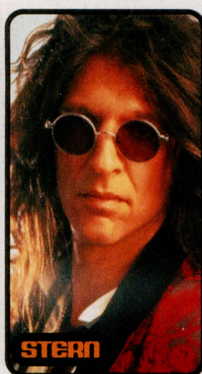
I like your ideas for actors for the live-action "Lupin the 3rd" movie. How about these for other movies?

"Gunsmith Cats": Jessica Alba as Rally Vincent

"Hellsing": Howard Stern as Arucard

Darrell Francis
Fort Washington, MD

Yeah, that's what "Hellsing" is missing. Fart jokes.



DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

Here are some picks for live action anime movies:

Lupin the 3rd: "Weird Al" Yankovic

Ash Ketchum: Steve "Crocodile Hunter" Irwin

Haruko Haruhara: Julia Stiles

Vash the Stampede: Mike Myers

Brock (from "Pokémon"): Eddie Murphy

Yugi Mutoh: Jeff Corwin

Ranma (male): Adam Sandler

Ranma (female): Emma Watson

Excel: Jessica Simpson

What do you think? Am I completely insane?

A.J. Philpott
Houston, TX

A.J., you are mostly insane. I'm sure you mean well, but if the movies you listed were actually

made with your star choices, Hollywood would go completely bankrupt. I'm trying to imagine Steve Irwin and Eddie Murphy running around the forest chasing pokémon, and I'm just not seeing it.

However, Jessica Simpson as Excel is brilliant. Brilliant! And I'd love to see Julia Stiles roaring around on a scooter kabonging people with a guitar. If it'll keep her out of crap like "Mona Lisa Smile," even better.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

Why are cats and foxes so popular in anime? I'm into about 40 different anime and cats or foxes are in lots of them. Why?

Katherine Norris
Kenova, WV

It's only natural that cats and foxes often pop up in anime, since they have prominent roles in Japanese folklore. Foxes are devious and like to play tricks on humans, according to legend. There are all sorts of old yarns about sly foxes getting the better of us stupid humans. And cats got a bad reputation centuries ago—if you've ever owned a cat who liked to sharpen its claws on your sofa, you can imagine the damage one of those critters could do to a Japanese home with rice-paper walls! Cats have a really bad rap in Buddhism, since a cat tried to thwart the rat who was racing to get medicine for Buddha himself.

But it's not all bad for cats and foxes. Figurines of the maneki neko, or beckoning cat, are popular charms thought to bring good fortune. And foxes are the messengers of Inari, the god/goddess of rice.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

What would happen on the show "Inuyasha" if Kagome turned into a duck?

Sammie Maxwell
Coronado, CA

Then I guess she could date Mousse, the guy who turns into a duck on "Ranma 1/2." Also, what the hell are you talking about?

COSPLAY CAVALCADE

VASH THE STAMPEDE FROM 'TRIGUN'

BY ZAC NAGGATZ, CEDAR RAPIDS, IA

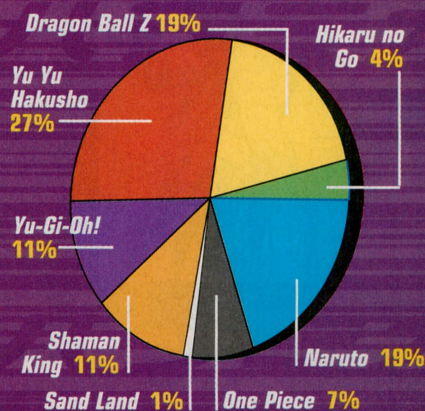
If you perchance happened to be at the 2003 Anime Reactor convention, held in Chicago, you might have possibly seen the world's greatest Vash the Stampede cosplayer wandering around. Zac Naggatz, of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, created the most detailed, elaborate Vash outfit we've ever seen—and we've seen a lot—from the vinyl red trench coat to the dozens of buckles to the boots on his feet. He even managed Vash's strap-laden, futuristic interior outfit! We'd give him a prize, but the judges at Anime Reactor already gave him one!

THIS LEATHER COSTUME IS MADE POSSIBLE BY JOHNSON'S BABY POWDER!



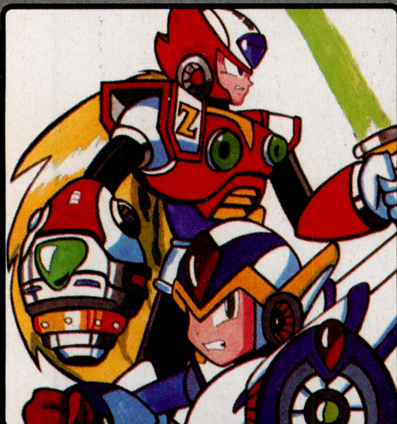
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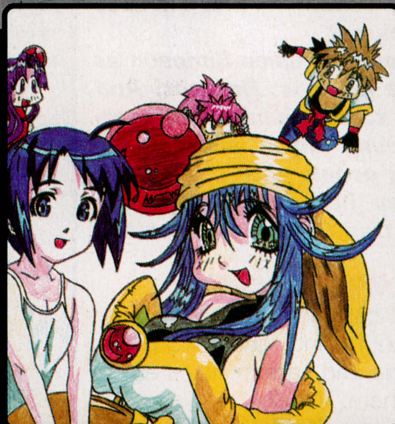


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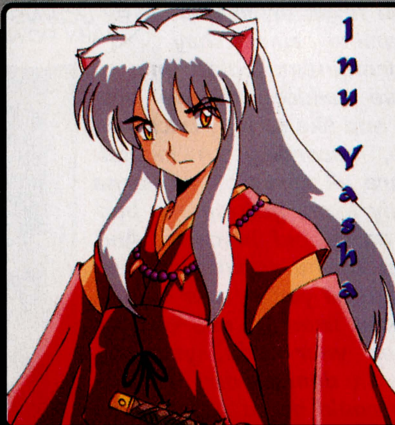
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DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

Hello there from a soldier who's in Iraq. I'm trying to find the title of a live-action movie based on an anime. It stars a heroine, and I believe the title contained the word "Princess." I am not too sure. I apologize for my vague description, but I know that you can assist me in my search for the title of this film.

PFC Joseph Cortez
101st Airborne

We're pretty sure you're talking about "Princess Blade," a new live-action movie adaptation of the '70s manga. It stars Japanese pop idol Yumiko Shaku as an assassin who finds love (hopefully without busting out into any J-pop production numbers). It was just released on DVD by ADV Films. Hmm, ADV DVD. Try saying that three times fast!

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

I believe that "Hunter x Hunter" should come to America because its creator is Yoshihiro Togashi, and I've always found his work interesting. He makes Japanese anime very appealing, and I hope sometime soon all his works will make it to America rather than only "Yu Yu Hakusho."

Cynthia Duke
via cyberspace

So far we haven't heard any plans to bring "Hunter x Hunter" over here, but given the success of "Yu Yu Hakusho," it's really only a matter of time. Give "Hakusho" a little more time to run its course—that is, goes through its episodes and manga—and then watch for "Hunter x Hunter" to be hot on its heels.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

I can't get enough of those anime girls! I have a huge collection of action figures and resin statues and posters and wall scrolls and keychains and framed cels of my favorite anime girls. On behalf of all us anime girl aficionados, please print only the hottest anime girl pictures you can find!

David Thorne
Oklahoma City, OK

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VOCAB LIST

Here's a quick rundown of anime jargon and useful Japanese

ANO—[AH-no] It means "that" when referring to an object distant from the speaker, but you're most likely to hear it in anime as the equivalent of "Umm..." or "uhh..." Something to say when you have nothing to say!

BAKA—[BAH-kah] Japanese for "idiot." Along with "kawaii," the most popular Japanese word learned by anime newbies.

EIGO—[AYY-go] English. Now you understand the meaning behind anime distributor AnimEigo's name!

HENTAI—[HEN-tie] Japanese for "pervert" or "perverted." Refers to naughty anime and manga too.

MANGA-KA—[MAHN-ga KA] A creator of manga.

OTAKU—[o-TAH-koo] Hardcore anime fan. If you dream about anime, you probably are one.

OVA—[or OVA] Stands for Original Video Animation. Anime that went direct-to-video or DVD.

SAMA—[SAH-mah] A suffix used when addressing someone really important or respected. Example: "Konnichi-wa, Tom Root-sama!"

SEIYUU—[SAY-yoo] A voice actor or actress.

SHŌNEN—[SHO-neh] An adjective meaning "for boys." Shōnen manga, shōnen anime, etc. Shōjo is the equivalent "for girls."

CULTURE SHOCKER

Why the Japanese do those weird things they do

Money, money, money! Or, rather, o-kane, o-kane, o-kane! Japanese money follows a tradition set hundreds of years ago by Chinese coins.

You're more apt to have a pocketful of coins than a wad of bills in Japan, because the lowest bill denomination is ¥1,000, kind of

like a \$10 bill in America. ¥1, ¥5, ¥10, ¥50, ¥100 and ¥500 are coins—which might explain the millions of vending machines in Japan. Plus, the 5 and 50-yen pieces each have a hole in the middle. Why? For one thing, it helps discern the coins' value at a glance—or a touch, for the sight-impaired.



DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

Back in issue #9, I noticed an upcoming DVD series release called "Wolf's Rain." I'm a very big fan of anything werewolf or vampire-based but it seems to me that anime focuses more on vampires than werewolves.

What other series, besides "Wolf's Rain," are 100 percent werewolf-based?

Adam Gullege
Sugar Land, TX

Not to dampen your enjoyment of "Wolf's Rain," but they're not werewolves. They're just wolves that can masquerade as humans, without any kind of transformation. Keiko Nobumoto, the creator of the show, feels pretty strongly about the difference.

We can't think of any 100 percent werewolf series, but ".hack" features a werewolf named Orca. The "Darkstalkers" anime also has a werewolf named Jon Talbain.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

What is the difference between an OAV and the actual series?

Tiffany Hartness
via cyberspace

We print a definition of OAV (we usually say the more known "OVA") from time to time, but I get this question enough that I figured I'd address it here.

An OVA is an Original Video Animation (OAV just puts the words in a different order). It goes directly to DVD and/or VHS, while regular series begin life on TV instead.

There are exceptions to every rule, of course, but for the most part OVAs are additional stories that show up after an anime series has already established its popularity (and usually after that series has ended its TV run and is off the

air). OVAs don't have to play by the rules, as they often exist outside normal continuity. And since OVAs are finite entities and don't ramble on for dozens or hundreds of episodes, the quality of animation is usually better than that of the TV series.

Again, we're just generalizing here.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

What does the title of "Azumanga Daioh" mean? It doesn't seem to have any correlation to the series. Is that the name of their school or something?

Chelsea Rochelle
Cincinnati, OH

Take the name of creator Azuma Kiyohiko and cross it with "manga" and you get "Azumanga." "Daioh" refers to Dengeki Daioh, the monthly anthology in which the manga was printed. And turn to page 44, and get a snappy look at the Azumanga girls' yearbook!

Henceforce, the name of "Animail" shall be changed to Tomletters Insider. [Editor's Note: No, it won't.]

And so I declare this edition of Tomletters Insider to be over! I'll be back next issue. Remember, keep those letters, e-mails and artwork coming! We read everything we get, and it's your input that shapes our magazine. You have the power!

—Tom Root

Kyush kyush kyush kyush kyush kyush kyush Tom Root kyush kyush kyush kyush! Opaaa!

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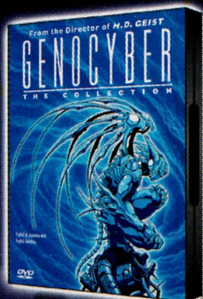
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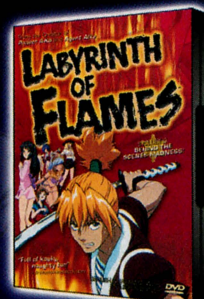
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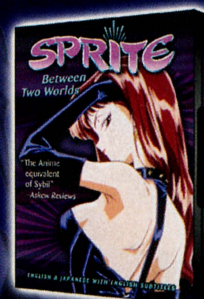
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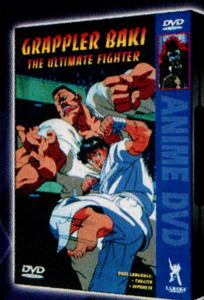
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INSIDER NEWS+NOTES

YOUR NEW 'MASTER'

Pokémon and Yu-Gi-Oh!, meet the next big thing: 'DuelMasters'



Just like celebrity deaths, multimedia Japanese invasions come in threes. First there was Pokémon, the all-encompassing anime/manga/Nintendo/collectible card game smash. Then came Yu-Gi-Oh!, sticking closely to the Pokémon mold, but focusing more on collectible cards.

Now, a new generation of card-battlin', monster-tradin' American kids are primed for the next big thing—and that next big thing is likely Duel Masters, currently the biggest thing in Japan.

Since May 2002, *Duel Masters* has sold 4 million decks of its trading card game, plus an additional 90 million booster decks, outpacing sales of *Yu-Gi-Oh!* and *Pokémon*, which have already sold billions of cards between them. *Duel Masters* has also ruled as the No. 1 Toy/Game in Japan for 11 months straight, as recognized by such trade publications as *Toy Weekly*. Now that tidal wave of momentum is about to come crashing down on American shores. So when James Szubski describes *Duel Masters* as a "global entertainment property for boys," we think that sounds just about "big" enough to describe it.

Szubski is the Duel Masters brand manager at Wizards of the Coast, the trading card game empire responsible for *Magic: The Gathering* worldwide (not to mention *Pokémon's* TCG success in North America), and the launch plans he describes for the game's debut here are impressive. There's the game itself, which arrives in March. There's the anime series on Cartoon Network, which debuted with a 90-minute sneak peek on Feb. 27, encompassing the first three episodes of the cartoon and introducing us to kid hero Shobu. There's the comic book series from Dreamwave, already on shelves. Action figures from Hasbro (WOTC's parent company) are on the way in the second half of 2004, and Atari will release video games for PlayStation 2 and Game Boy Advance in the future. There are also plans for an online community, a 15-stop mall tour and other licensed products.

Add it all up, and by this time next year properties like Yu-Gi-Oh! and Pokémon might be just a distant memory.

ACE IN THE WHOLE Shobu may be new in town, but he's got his eye on the entire entertainment spectrum.



MONSTER MASH The art on each Duel Masters card represents a real monster living in the Battle Zone.

IN THE BEGINNING

Duel Masters came to life in an unusual manner befitting its unusual success. "It's the first time that an American company and a Japanese company partnered from the very beginning to create a new IP [intellectual property] for boys," Szubski said.

It began in a weekly manga anthology called *Korokoro*, where for five years the *Duel Masters* manga had followed a group of kids competing in WOTC's *Magic: The Gathering*. *Duel Masters* was voted as the No. 1 manga Japanese readers wanted to see turned into a TV show, Szubski said, but WOTC wasn't comfortable allowing an anime version featuring its flagship property *Magic*. "With *Magic: The Gathering*'s rich history and the strong emotions our players have about the game, Wizards felt that an Japanese anime cartoon was simply a bad fit," he explained.

Instead, the Renton, Wash.-based company teamed with Japanese partners Shogakukan and Mitsui-Kids to create a brand new game for the *Duel Masters* characters to play. This card game was introduced into the manga of the same name, and the rest is history. "WOTC clearly has a lot of understanding about how to create great games," Szubski says. "Japan brought an anime sensibility. The combination of those two things, and a top-notch, high quality product, really resonated with gamers."

SHOBU-SHOBU

The anime and manga introduce us to an Ash Ketchum for a new generation, Shobu. Shobu's a kid with normal problems, but his father was a Kaijudo Master who mysteriously disappeared. Now, a shadowy organization now watches Shobu, interested in Shobu's ability to bring Duel Masters creatures to life.

"*Kaiju* is the word for Godzilla-like creatures," Szubski explains. "*Do* is 'the way' or 'the path.'" Put them together and you've got *kaijudo*, an important term in the Duel Masters universe. Practitioners of the Duel Masters game are called Kaijudo Masters—players who use their card decks in order to battle one another with giant fantasy creatures. Some players, like our hero, the young Shobu, can actually see the monsters at war during gameplay, in a hyper reality called the Battle Zone. Even fewer players

(continued on next page)

HITTING THE JACKPOT?

Which Duel Masters cards will cost collectors the big money this spring?

In any hot new card game, some cards will go for big bucks in as collectibles. We've determined the five cards *Duel Masters* players will go nuts for, and asked Duel Masters brand manager James Szubski to blab about 'em.

◀ HANUSA, RADIANCE ELEMENTAL

"Not only does this card break two shields when it attacks, it also has the highest power rating in the set," Szubski said. It's defense-shattering might players won't want to live without.



AQUA SNIPER ▶

"A solid attacker who has the nasty habit of returning your opponent's creatures to his hand." And if they're in your opponent's hands, they're no threat to you. Savvy?



◀ ROARING GREAT HORN

"This bruiser's power gets amped up to 10000 when he attacks and he can break two shields!" And that extra +2000 power boost sure comes in handy during battle.



VAMPIRE SILPHY ▶

"Her mere arrival in the battle zone can instantly destroy a legion of weak creatures." Now that's what we call making an entrance.



◀ GATLING SKYTERROR

"A threat to both shields and creatures, nothing is safe when this card is in the battle zone." Plus it's got a rotor on its butt. You can't beat that. ■ TR



For more info on *Duel Masters*, buy *InQuest Gamer* magazine #108, on sale now!

(continued)

understand that the Battle Zone isn't just make-believe; it's a real place, and the card games Kaijudo Masters play have an impact on actual events in the Battle Zone.

IT'S IN THE GAME

Shobu and the other characters appear only in the manga and anime, not in the trading card game itself. And it's that game that's the true heart of the Duel Masters phenomenon. "Creatures from *Duel Masters* come from five distinct and mysterious civilizations," Szubski explained: Fire, Nature, Water, Light and Darkness. All of these civilizations are rendered into card form by top Japanese fantasy artists, making the game an eye-grabber, to say the least.

But Szubski offered other reasons the game caught on. A newbie *Duel Masters* player can finish a game in 15 minutes, while a champion player can finish in just five minutes, he said. By comparison, a game of *Yu-Gi-Oh!* can take 25-30 minutes to complete. Players get what Szubski calls "the victory experience" more often and, plain and simple, can simply squeeze more games in per session.



GETTING BLITZED

So now, the question remains: will *Duel Masters* itself feel the "victory experience" in America? "I think it will do very well based on the fact that the cartoon will be out before the card game is released," said Eric Price, president of gaming retailer Cardhaus. The animated series, Price predicts, makes *Duel Masters* a contender for *Yu-Gi-Oh!*'s crown down the road.

The Hasbro Properties group has plenty more planned for *Duel Masters*, like books from Scholastic, "Cinemanga" from TOKYOPOP and a list of merchandise that includes "apparel, accessories, food and beverages, gifts and collectibles, party goods and sporting goods," according to Audrey DeSimone, Hasbro's director of corporate communications. And don't forget the Dreamwave comic book which included promo and exclusive cards.

After the anime's Feb. 27 kickoff on Cartoon Network, the show settles into the channel's Saturday lineup starting March 13. "It will bring a new slant, a new window to this genre of television show," said Terry Kalagian, the network's vice president of programming. "What's fun about *Duel Masters* is that there's a bit more comedy in it than *Yu-Gi-Oh!* I'm really looking forward to getting it on the air and hearing the viewers' reactions," she confided. "And seeing the ratings, certainly."

Card decks, anime, manga, toys, video games, books, mall tour...*Duel Masters* could soon dethrone *Yu-Gi-Oh!* as the hottest import in America. But Yami Yugi should have seen it coming—after all, these things come in threes. ■ **Tom Root**

LADIES' LUCK

Which girl will Tenchi pick in the "Tenchi Muyo" finale? Place your bets!

Followers of "Tenchi Muyo" have been desperate to see nice guy Tenchi Masaki finally pick his woman! He's slated to choose one lucky lady at the end of the current OVA in Japan, and *A.I.* has the rundown.



RYOKO: Space pirate Ryoko spent several centuries under the control of the evil scientist Kagato. While mostly redeemed, Ryoko still manages to leave plenty of chaos in her wake—but Tenchi can't deny that her affection and her hotness are quite genuine. Odds: 2-1.



AYEKA: As crown princess of the interstellar Jurai Empire, demure Ayeka always maintains a proper demeanor. Tenchi and Ayeka have gotten plenty close before and her temperament seems to suit Tenchi's calm demeanor better. Odds: 2-1.

MIHOSHI: Clumsy, accident prone, and a little ditz, this cute blond Galaxy Police officer may be hot, but Tenchi is already accident-prone enough. Odds: 5-1

WASHU: The self-proclaimed greatest scientific genius in the universe, Washu is 20,000 years old but looks 12—not good. Plus, if Tenchi picked her, he'd never be safe from her terrifying "experiments." Odds: 20-1.



SASAMI: Ayeka's younger sister, the good-natured Sasami is actually the avatar of the goddess Tsunami. But she's like 13! Too young! Odds: 50-1.

RYO-OKKI: Sasami's best friend, this cute and cuddly cat-rabbit can transform into a spaceship. We doubt Tenchi wants to date an animal or a spaceship. Odds: 150-1

BRITNEY SPEARS: Even if the beautiful pop star landed Tenchi, her relationship track record suggests that it wouldn't last. Oh, Britney! When will you find love? Odds: 6-1 ■ **Caitlin Moriarity**

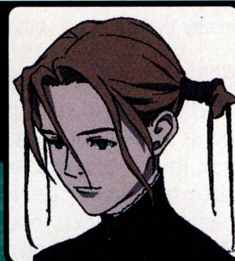


FASHION ALERT!

GETTING ROBIN'S HAIR IS NO WITCH HUNT!

Witch Hunter Robin has two powers: pyrokinesis and fabulous hair. Now that "Robin" is on Cartoon Network, fans and cosplayers alike have attempted to copy her coif. New York hairstylist Ryan Trygstad, a stylist in the famed Sally Hershberger salon, says the look isn't just for otaku! "They're messy ponytails, which is actually very in right now," he enthused. "We use this style lot on the fashion runway."

If you want to do the 'do, Trygstad instructs you to start with a volumizing product, to get the appropriate mass of hair. Then, "finish with a pomade to make it look messy, like bedroom hair, in the front." Finally, use suede or soft leather straps to tie off the 'tails. Then you can start hunting witches in style! ■ **Rebecca Bundy**



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THE PROS OF CONS

Anime conventions set to explode in 2004—and you shouldn't try to escape!

The fire marshal was mad, but for last year's Anime Boston, it was a good kind of problem. The April 2003 convention's attendance was at 5,000 by the marshal's count—a good 4,400 people more than the convention organizers had anticipated.

Anime conventions across the nation were filled to the brim in 2003—Big Apple Anime Fest and Nekocon are two others who had to turn away otaku on their first or second day—despite the rise in the number of conventions held. The number of cons jumped from 43 in 2002 to 56 in 2003 in the U.S., and five brand-new cons have been announced for 2004...so far.

The explosion isn't just in the steadily rising numbers of anime conventions, but how many fans pack into each one. "You have more cons in towns that have a million people or less," marveled Lance Heiskell, director of fanbase marketing and brand manager of FUNimation. "Austin, Texas, has a convention and they get 2,000 to 3,000 people. The growth is in the mid-market cities."

And it doesn't take a seasoned con planner

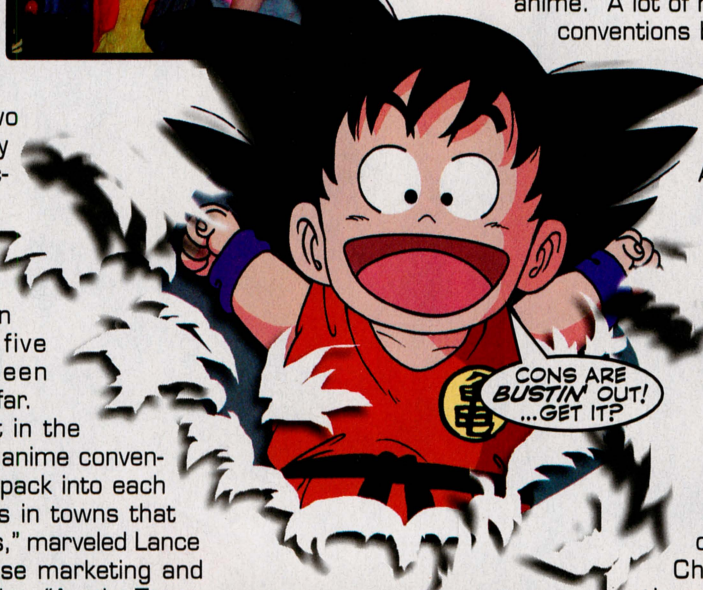


to figure out this phenomenon is clearly parallel to the growth of the anime fanbase. "[It's] definitely the influence of Cartoon Network," explained Isaac Alexander, the director of relations for Sakura Con in Seattle, Wash. "People get interested in [anime], and they look around and see there are conventions and they go, 'Wow!'" With more fans comes the need for more anime conventions, even in regions where there isn't a huge population like Southern California or New York City, Alexander explained.

The anime companies especially have not been slow to recognize the importance of conventions for marketing their anime. "A lot of marketing thought goes into the conventions because this is where you learn about what's hot, what's not, what the fans like, perhaps get new ideas for titles to license in the future," allowed Jason Alnus, marketing manager for TOKYOPOP.

And it's happening even more in 2004.

In March, Anime Detour will have it's first show in Livingston, Minn., while Santa Clara, Calif., gets Anime Overdose; May sees the Pacific Media Expo in Anaheim, Calif., and Houston, Texas' Oni-Con will compete with Tsubasa-Con in Charleston, WV, in October. If these five new cons aren't in your area, check www.anime-cons.com for a full listing of 2004's con schedule. ■ **Trisha L. Sebastian**



COSPLAY CRAZINESS Seeing fans dressed as chickens (top) or Goku (above) are just the tip of what's in store at anime cons this season.

CON ARTISTS

At the right shows, you can find amazing special events and performers. Watch for 'em!

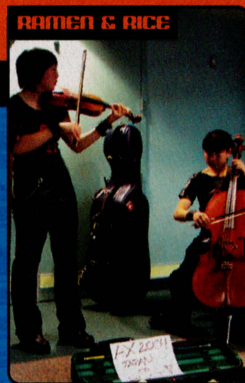
Planning on going to a convention in 2004? Here are some cool things to see and neat people to meet!

IRON CHEF AMV: In the style of the popular show, two anime music video (AMV) creators compete head-to-head mixing and matching scenes from a list of set anime, one song, and a "secret ingredient." See Fanime and Anime Weekend Atlanta for this event.

KAIJU BIG BATTLE: Ever see a pair of plantains slam into a gigantic can of noodles? You will when you watch the wrestling antics of Kaiju Big Battle, where the WWE meets Godzilla and everything else in-between. Check out www.kaiju.com for a list of their appearances.

RAMEN AND RICE:

To entertain fans in line, Kimberly (a.k.a. Ramen) on violin and Michelle (a.k.a. Rice) on cello have converted several popular themes into beautiful string duos, including the themes for "Cowboy Bebop," "Trigun," *Super Mario Bros.* and more. Find the duo at Fanime, Anime Expo and AnimeFEST. ■ **TS**



LOVE AND WAR

Meet the triumphant **ANIME INSIDER** Bachelor and Bachelorette winners—Kurama and Faye!

When we started the Bachelor and Bachelorette contest in *Anime Insider* #10, we had no idea that so many of you were interested in the love lives of anime characters.

Okay, we had a hunch, since many of you write in asking inappropriate questions about their private lives anyway. But when we lined up 16 boys and girls to find the most desirable hotties in anime, even we weren't sure of the answer.

Oh, some decisions were overwhelmingly easy, with Duo Maxwell ("Gundam Wing") crushing Akio Ohtori ("Revolutionary Girl Utena") with six times as many votes. Others were closer; just 63 votes separated first-round winner Bulma ("Dragon Ball Z") from goddess Urd ("Oh My Goddess!").

In the end, on the guys' side it came down to a supernatural match between half dog-demon Inu-Yasha and the soft-spoken fox spirit Kurama from "Yu Yu Hakusho" beating out good-lookers like Spike Spiegel ("Cowboy Bebop"), Vash the Stampede ("Trigun"), Eikichi Onizuka ("Great Teacher Onizuka"), and Tuxedo Mask ("Sailor Moon") among others.

For the ladies' side, it was lovely captain Misato Katsuragi from "Evangelion" and best-looking gam-

bling addict Faye Valentine ("Cowboy Bebop") who squared off after knocking out babes such as Naru Narusegawa ("Love Hina"), Lum ("Urusei Yatsura"), Fujiko Mine ("Lupin the 3rd") and Ryoko ("Tenchi Muyo").

Over 1,100 votes were cast to decide the winner in the last round of the single-elimination tournament—but Kurama and Faye reigned supreme. If you want to see the entire attractive battle, check out anime-insider.com.

■ TS



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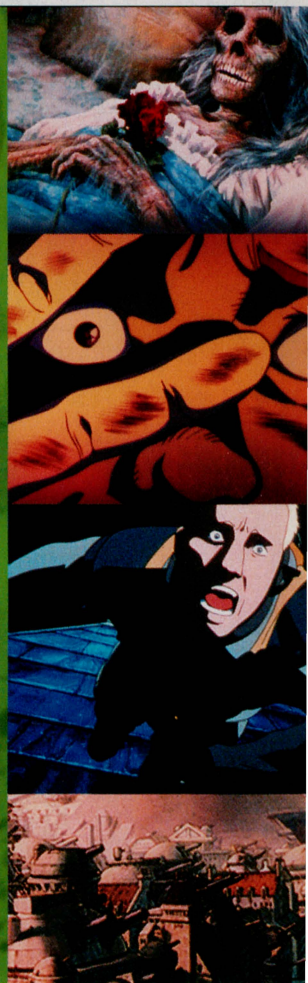
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RUFFOLO

LAST MAN STANDING

A BATTLE YOU THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER SEE

RICK HUNTER VS. AMURO RAY



Rick

VF-1J Veritech

16

5'10"

Lynn Minmei &
Lisa Hayes

Turtle Wax

MECH

AGE

HEIGHT

LOVE INTEREST

FAVORITE MECH
POLISH

RX-78-2 Gundam

15

6'1"

Lalah Sune

Armor All



Amuro

RICK HUNTER: Showoff stunt pilot Rick Hunter never intended to fight a war, but when the military forces of a giant alien race called the Zentraedi attacked Earth, Rick was swept into battle as the pilot of a Veritech fighter. Reluctant to use violence, Rick was forced to mature in a hurry to survive this intergalactic conflict.

AMURO RAY: Amuro Ray was a young techie more interested in machines than people—until his peaceful space colony was attacked by the Principality of Zeon! The impulsive and hotheaded Amuro jumped into the firefight with both feet in the experimental Gundam RX-78 mobile suit, and never looked back.

THE BATTLE BEGINS

Sent to investigate an energy disturbance on the far side of Earth's moon, Rick Hunter has found a rippling tear in the fabric of space-time.

On the other side of this interdimensional wormhole, Amuro Ray lets his scientific curiosity get the better of him, pointing his Gundam straight for it—and finds himself face to face with a strange mecha!

Startled, Rick and Amuro must quickly size up their robotic counterparts. "Friend or foe?" Rick puzzles, but Amuro decides he can take no chances. "That must be a new Zeon mobile suit!" Amuro concludes, and chooses to shoot first.

The Gundam lets loose a burst from its 60mm Vulcan guns, which pepper the hull of Rick's Veritech. "Guess that solves that!" Rick says. "Huh! The Zentraedi finally chose a brighter paint scheme for their new battlepods!" Rick returns fire with a blast from his 55mm gatling cannon, but Amuro maneuvers clear of the enemy fire with ease.

Gundam and Veritech now circle one another uneasily, drawing closer and closer. Rick tries to draw Amuro in, not realizing short range is what Amuro Ray does best. The Gundam lunges for the Veritech, unsheathing its beam saber. A bright pink shaft of light slashes in a wicked arc toward the Veritech—only Rick's reflexes, shifting the Veritech into its half-plane, half-robot Guardian mode, keep his mecha from getting cleaved into two. The beam saber still cuts the Veritech's arm clean off.

Amuro smirks, expecting a hasty retreat from this strange mobile suit. But the unflappable Veritech pilot instead charges the Gundam. Startled, Amuro takes another swipe at the Veritech with its beam saber, but the increased speed of the Guardian form lets Rick duck the strike. With its remaining arm, the Veritech snatches the beam saber away from the Gundam.

Flustered, Amuro tries to draw his beam cannon, but it's too late—the Veritech carves the Gundam apart with its own sword.

THE WINNAH:

Rick surveys the floating mecha parts in front of him. "Maybe the SDF scientists can discover a Zentraedi weakness with these," he says, chucking the Gundam parts back through the wormhole one by one. The last piece is the Gundam cockpit, containing a fuming Amuro Ray. "I didn't want to be a soldier anyways," Amuro sulks.

Are there any cataclysmic anime match-ups you'd like to see on these pages? Let us know at AnimelInsider@aol.com now!



FROG DAY AFTERNOON Paper Sisters
Michelle (top left) and Maggie (top right) love
reading, but Anita (below) loves those frogs!

TO 'DIE' FOR

His pen gave four women the power over paper. ANIME INSIDER interviews 'Read or Die the TV' creator Hideyuki Kurata

BY ROBERT BRICKEN

Money, power, politics—these are what wars are fought over. But in the mind of Hideyuki Kurata, the real prize is history, and his wars are fought with...paper?

Don't scoff. Kurata's secret agents of the British Library Task Force wield the incredible power to control paper absolutely. Think paper shields that can stop bullets or giant paper dragons that can be flown into battle. With these tricks, the ladies protect important books from resurrected historical figures turned evil. It's the world of "Read or Die," which continues in Geneon's upcoming "R.O.D. the TV" with a new direction.

These bibliophilic battles are coming from a mind that's no stranger to weirdness. Anime creator Hideyuki Kurata was the scriptwriter for the cult favorite "Excel Saga" which paro-

died every anime genre available. He first brought "Read or Die" as out as manga

but was thrust into the fanboy's spotlight when he adapted it into an anime OVA series in 2001. Starring the bespectacled bibliophile Yomiko Readman, the OVA (out in the States from Manga Entertainment) became such a hit that a full 26-episode TV series sequel debuted last year in Japan. It's more of the same paper-based mayhem, but this time Kurata's moved the action to Asia and introduced a whole new team of young female agents called the Paper Sisters (no relation).

Like Yomiko at a Barnes & Noble bargain bin, we grabbed our chance to talk with Kurata and discovered for him that when it comes to reading or doing anything else there's only one choice.

ANIME INSIDER: We've seen some pretty unusual super-powers over the years, but the ability to control paper takes the cake. How the heck did you come up with the concept for "Read Or Die"?

HIDEYUKI KURATA: I was wondering if it were possible to do an action anime with a more literary, more scholarly atmosphere, unlike a typical physical action story. Also, I like to read books a lot, so it was my desire to see an anime full of them!

Did you have any specific influences when making "Read or Die"?

I can't choose just one! I was inspired by bits and pieces from everything I've read throughout my life!

But there must have been some reason you introduced the Paper Sisters instead of using OVA characters like Yomiko Readman or Miss Deep.

I had the thought of creating something new, instead of just an ordinary sequel.

I had just seen "Charlie's Angels" at the time the project began, and so I wanted to make an action flick that was really fun and exciting with three girls as the main characters.

In addition to changing the cast, you moved the show to Hong Kong. Why?

I wanted it to be a very up-tempo show, like Hong Kong action films.

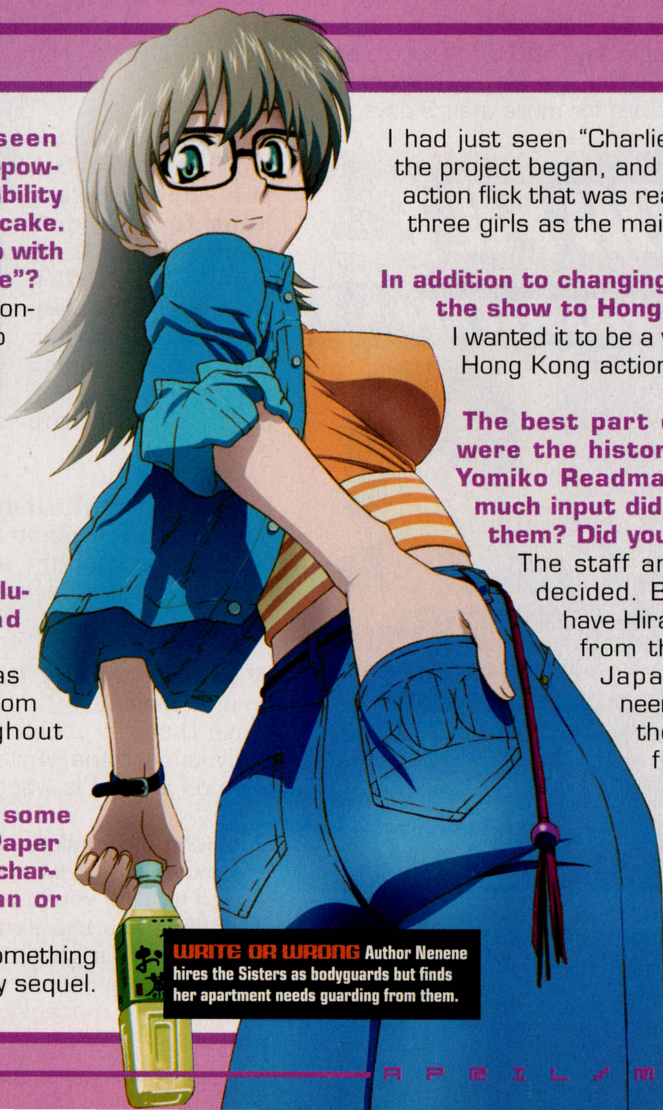
The best part of the "R.O.D." OVA were the historical characters who Yomiko Readman had to fight. How much input did you have in choosing them? Did you have any favorites?

The staff and I met together and decided. But I knew I wanted to have Hiraga Gennai in the series from the beginning. He's the Japanese inventor/engineer/artist/developer from the 1700s who built the first Japanese power generator and also the asbestos suit.

Were there any people you wanted to use, but couldn't?

Thomas Edison, the Wright Brothers and

WRITE OR WRONG Author Nenene hires the Sisters as bodyguards but finds her apartment needs guarding from them.



"I had just seen 'Charlie's Angels' and wanted to make an action flick with three girls."

-HIDEYUKI KURATA

Sir Isaac Newton. In the early version of the plot, we were actually planning to have Cleopatra, Leonardo da Vinci, and Goethe make appearances!

So we can assume you're a literature buff?

Yes. But not just books! I also enjoy reading manga and looking through photo collections.

So you'd say you read a lot.

From the time I was just three years old until the age I am now, 35, there has not been a single day that I didn't read a book. I can absolutely guarantee it. In fact, there's only *one time* that I've missed going to a bookstore for more than 3 days.

STATS ON FILE...

HIDEYUKI KURATA

BORN: July 9, 1968

LIVES: "In a corner of Tokyo."

FIRST WRITING

PROJECT: "I first got involved with anime with the script of 'Yun Yun Paradise.' But I think the script of *Elha Academy*, a short manga story based on Hidemoto Tsubura's 'El Hazard,' was my first manga project."

READ OR DIE CREDITS:

Creator and writer for the *Read or Die* and *New Read or Die* manga, scriptwriter for the "Read or Die" OVA and "R.O.D. the TV" series.

NON-R.O.D. CREDITS: Writer for "Excel Saga," "Battle Athletes," "Battle Athletes Victory" and creator and writer for "Brigadoon."

FAVORITE AUTHOR: "Futaro Yamada is my favorite. He writes lots of ninja novels, but each one of them is exciting. For foreign authors, I enjoy Stephen King and Phillip K. Dick. I like their inspiration and how they carry the stories."

FAVORITE BOOK: "The War of the Worlds, by H.G. Wells. That was the first novel that I ever read."

THE QUOTABLE KURATA: "Yomiko Readman is my ideal woman." ■ RB



PAPER TIGERS Charlie's Angels (below) may ride jets and sports cars, but the Sisters (above) fly on giant paper dragons. Now, which are cooler?

Can you tell us American fans some of the literary figures who appear in the TV series?

Sorry, that's top secret.

Hmph. Well, for part of "R.O.D. the TV," the Paper Sisters hunt for the now missing Yomiko Readman. Will OVA characters Miss Deep or Drake Anderson ever make a cameo appearance?

Sorry, that's top secret too!

Double "Hmph." What about after the TV series? Do you have more plans for "R.O.D."?

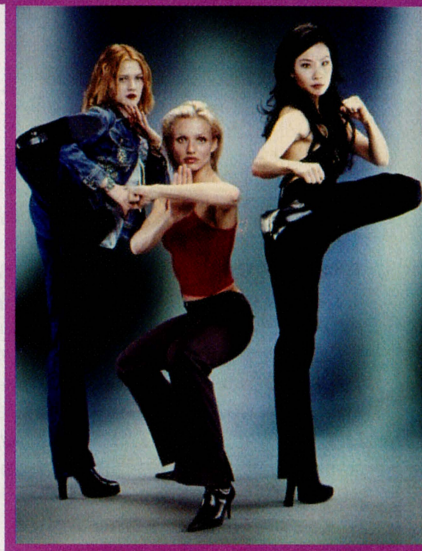
No plan or thought at the moment. But personally, Yomiko is the character that I would like to keep on writing about.

What about the Paper Sisters? Which one is your favorite?

I love them all....but if I have to pick one, it would be the youngest one, Anita. I think the fact that she doesn't fawn on anyone is what makes her really cool.

Speaking of Yomiko—fans have noticed your eyeglasses are exactly the same as hers, although you've often denied it. Will you just admit to us now, on the record, that they are the same?

I think they're slightly different.

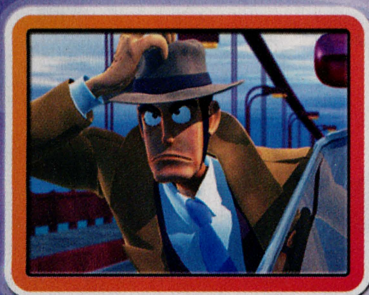


Anime Insider managing editor Robert Bricken has a paper cut he can't explain in a place he can't show you.

Fantastic heists, impossible escapes, and busty brunettes — all in a day's work for anime's favorite thief.

LUPIN THE 3RD

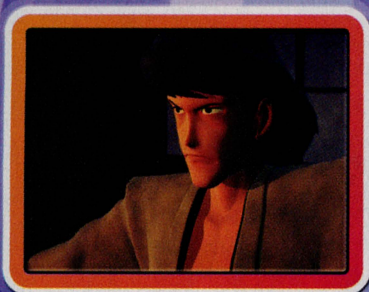
TREASURE OF THE SORCERER KING



Use disguises and stealth to evade your enemies, especially Interpol Inspector Zenigata.

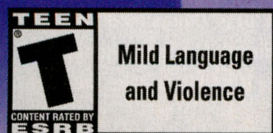


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...or the sword wielding samurai, Goemon.

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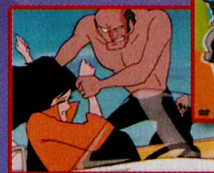


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LUPIN THE 3RD



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Pioneer sound.vision.soul

PlayStation 2



RIDE IT SPACE COWBOYS!

On a steel horse, the 'Cowboy Bebop' crew rides. Saddle up for a tour! • by Miguel A. E. Betita



Move over, *Millennium Falcon*—there's a new heap of junk moseyin' along the spaceways.

And this ship is flown by more than some two-bit smugglers. Try the baddest bounty hunters the solar system's ever seen. We're talkin' about the home base of the "Cowboy Bebop" crew, a junker named by jazz: the *Bebop*. In the two years since the 26-episode tale premiered on Cartoon Network, "Cowboy Bebop" has wrangled the ratings

and making stars of its crew—stylish drifter Spike, ex-cop Jet, beautiful gambler Faye and wacko computer genius girl Ed—but how much do you know about their ship?

"It's not just their ship, it's their home," says "Bebop" mechanical designer Kimitoshi Yamane. "I wanted it to look like a home. I based the design off of a fishing ship, so it wouldn't look like a battleship or a cruise ship."

Owner Jet purchased this one-time inter-

planetary trawler away from its days hauling frozen fish from Ganymede and refitted her to suit Cowboy (bounty huntin') operations. At 142 meters long, 69.2 meters wide, and 45.6 meters tall, the *Bebop's* almost 50% longer than a football field, with suped-up engines and communications. It's certainly not the prettiest ship to look at, and a lot of things need fixin' on it, but for these Cowboys, there's no place like home. And that's why it's time to take the tour.

CONTROL ROOM

With wide, circular windows to look out from while piloting, the bridge can control everything aboard the ship—hatches, auto piloting...the works! While Jet's basically in charge of the ship operations, he also finds the time to kick back, either chatting on the videophones (like in episode 21) or playing shogi with Spike, like he does in the movie!



CORRIDORS & GRAVITY

The spinning room found in the middle of the ship is actually a giant revolving centrifuge that creates artificial gravity. Connected to various corridors with round, heavy doors, it's generally cold, poorly-lit and a bit spooky. The centrifuge's rungs act like an elevator and ladder—you just have to grab on, and it'll take you to other floors on the *Bebop*.



HANGARS

Directly underneath the control room and connected to the runway is the hangar, where their three ships are stored, maintained by Jet and tethered down in case of zero gravity. Here Spike ejected a mutant lobster while holding onto a motorized safety rung; he *could* have stood behind the safety of the chain-link barrier fence.



THE KITCHEN

The kitchen might not be much to look at, but it has everything to make a home-cooked meal, including utensils hanging on a rack above a propane fuel-tank burner. Jet makes almost all of the meals because the others can't cook, but sometimes, when he's in a bad mood and makes the living room a no-smoking area (like episode 21), Spike and Faye use it as a smoking lounge, too.



THE LIVING ROOM

The crew—especially Ed—spends most of their time here, which is where they eat meals and discuss bounties. While Spike sleeps on the comfy yellow couch and Ed plays on her computer, Faye and Jet usually lounge and/or smoke. While it connects to many different parts of the ship, it also has a round hatch which can connect to other nearby ships!



JET'S WORK STATION

Because the *Bebop* is their base and home, Spike, Jet, and Faye all have to have their own personal spaces, away from everyone else. Jet's own room displays row after row of bonsai trees, which he trims, pots and waters while at his workbench. "I designed it to be small like a captain's room," says Yamane.



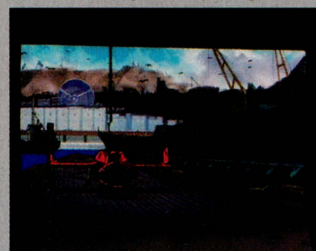
THE HEAD

It's just a tiny one-stall bathroom, but it's got its own jettison hatch to dispose of stinky waste, as seen in episode 21. Faye seems to spend a lot of time here, like after she ate *extremely* expired emergency rations and psychedelic mushrooms (episode 17), or when she was handcuffed there as a bounty herself in episode 3.



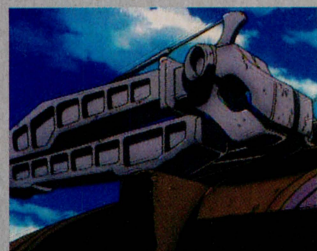
THE RUNWAY

Though their personal ships each have vertical take-off or landing (VTOL) capabilities, the runway's equipped with a flush-deck hydraulic catapult for quick launches. It's also useful when the ship's not in the air. On nice days, Faye will sunbathe on the deck, Spike fishes off the side of the ship to catch some food, and Jet sometimes hangs laundry along it!



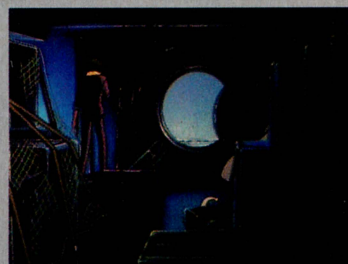
GRAPPLING ARMS

In deep space, floating aimlessly in zero gravity is as dangerous as it gets—thank goodness for the two power arms, located at the rear and top of the ship! Though rarely used, the two robotic limbs were probably leftovers from its days as a fishing ship for loading and unloading cargo. Now, they're used to seize nearby free-floating ships.



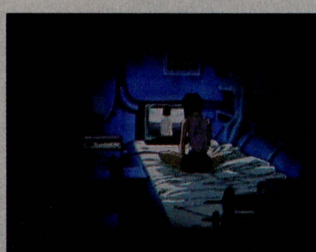
CARGO HOLDS

Not even the crew have toured all the cold, empty rooms from the *Bebop*'s days as a fishing boat. "The cargo hold used to be where fish were kept back when the *Bebop* was a fishing boat, so it's like a giant fridge," says Yamane. As a result, lots of things get stored away but are easily forgotten and left behind—like a lobster Spike once hid in here and forgot about. In episode 11, it mutated into an intelligent, moving black fungus that nearly incapacitated the entire crew!



FAYE'S AND SPIKE'S ROOMS

Even in a ship as large as the *Bebop*, private rooms are at a premium. Faye's room has iron walls and little else—a woman with no history and a massive debt has little credit with which to buy new furniture, other than the antique VHS player and TV she picks up in episode 18.



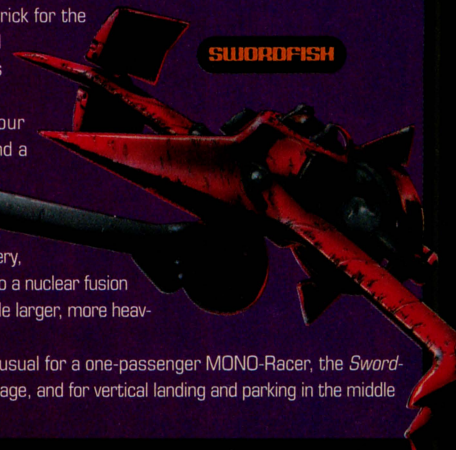
Intern Miguel A.E. Betita serves Anime Insider as writer, organizer and ballast.

HITCHHIKER'S RIDE TO THE GALAXY

Slow and steady might do the trick for the *Bebop*, but when speed and action is needed, Spike launches his *Swordfish II*.

Only 13.8 meters long, four wing-mounted machine guns and a plasma cannon attached to the undercarriage compensate for its lack of heavy artillery, but its amazing speed—thanks to a nuclear fusion aero-spike—allows Spike to tackle larger, more heavily-armed ships.

Though slightly larger than usual for a one-passenger MONO-Racer, the *Swordfish* can fold its wings up for storage, and for vertical landing and parking in the middle of the street! ■ MB



BEST OF THE BEST

*The Greatest Anime,
Manga and More
of 2003*

*by the
A.I. staff*

If 2002 was a banner year for anime, then 2003 was the year anime got its own PR division, flew a blimp over the Super Bowl and guest-starred on "Friends." Anime was everywhere and did just about everything in the past year without a hint of slowing down.

That's all well and good for anime and its faithful otaku, but it made choosing the second annual Best of the Best Awards a lot harder. It was nice of the Academy to help us out a little by giving Hayao Miyazaki's "Spirited Away" the Oscar for Best Animated Picture, but look over the anime releases of 2003—more than 500 of 'em at last count—and you'll agree that one award is hardly enough to do justice to the year that was.

Hence, we present our second annual Best of the Best Awards. It's just a little something we like to do to help recognize some of the many, many outstanding achievements that made us otaku deliriously happy—and deliriously broke—over the past 365 days. If you've had trouble deciding which DVDs, manga collections and goodies were worth your dollar, this should be your one-stop reference. We guarantee these award recipients won because they were truly the best...well...you know.

We've chosen the winners, called the limo and chilled the champagne; all you have to do is read. And put on some nice clothes, for goodness' sake! It's an awards ceremony!

BEST TV SERIES

'FLCL' (Synch-Point)

You're living in a bizarro world! Left is right, right is wrong, meat is potatoes and here's why—because only in another reality could "FLCL" get on American TV. Unedited, at that. The problems are easy to spot: it's still tough to get anime on the air, especially an anime that is only six half-hour episodes long and never makes sense for a single moment during those six episodes. There's no reason on God's green Earth such an anime should air, but somehow it did, just this past August on Adult Swim.

The reasons "FLCL" wins Best TV Series are the same reasons Cartoon Network Creative Director Sean Akins calls it "the coolest show ever made by humans." Take a young boy, have him get hit on (figuratively) by his older brother's girlfriend, hit on (literally) by a Vespa scooter-riding, Rickenbacker bass-wielding alien named Haruko, and just let the robots start fly-

COOL RUNNINGS From top: Canti, Naota and Haruko are a miracle of coolness.



RIGHT IS WRONG Watch your fingers—Haruko (far right) swings a mean bass guitar.

ing from his head.

If that doesn't make sense, don't worry. It all starts to become clear the fifth or sixth time you watch it. Studio Gainax (of "Evangelion" fame) has made an achingly beautiful ode to youth, coping with adulthood, the loneliness and weirdness of growing up and young, young love...and they did so with robots, giant irons, a plethora of anime in-jokes and a nearly incoherent story structure.

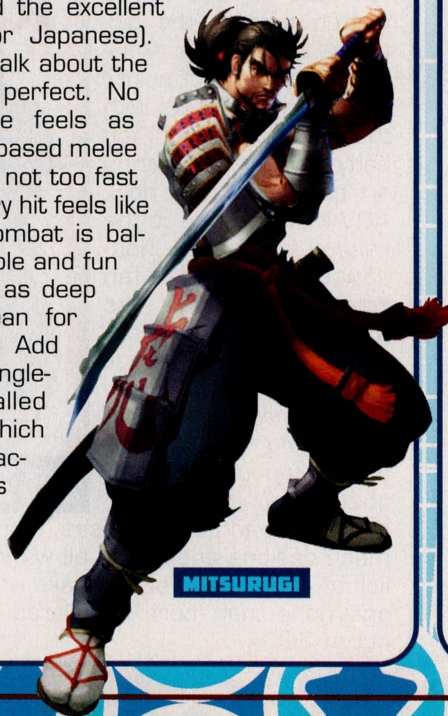
Oh, and the soundtrack by J-rock miracles The Pillows is the coolest music ever recorded by human beings, so that helps, too.

"FLCL" was and is the best, but it never got on TV, even in Japan. It never should have made it here. The fact that it did was easily one of the most important anime moments of the year, at least...in bizarro world.

BEST VIDEO GAME

'SOUL CALIBUR II' (Namco)

Soul Calibur II has a very helpful little time counter that lets you know how long you've been playing. Once our copy of the 3D fighting game masterpiece hit 200 hours, we figured it earned video game of the year. Sure, we could rave about the sterling graphics, the lush soundtrack and the excellent voices (in English or Japanese). But we'll choose to talk about the gameplay, which is perfect. No other fighting game feels as right as the weapon-based melee of *Soul Calibur II*; it's not too fast or too slow, and every hit feels like it really hits. The combat is balanced to be accessible and fun for new players but as deep as the Mediterranean for experienced players. Add to that a colossal single-player mode called Weapon Master, which unlocks bonus characters, art, weapons and more, and it's an easy choice. It's just not easy to stop playing.

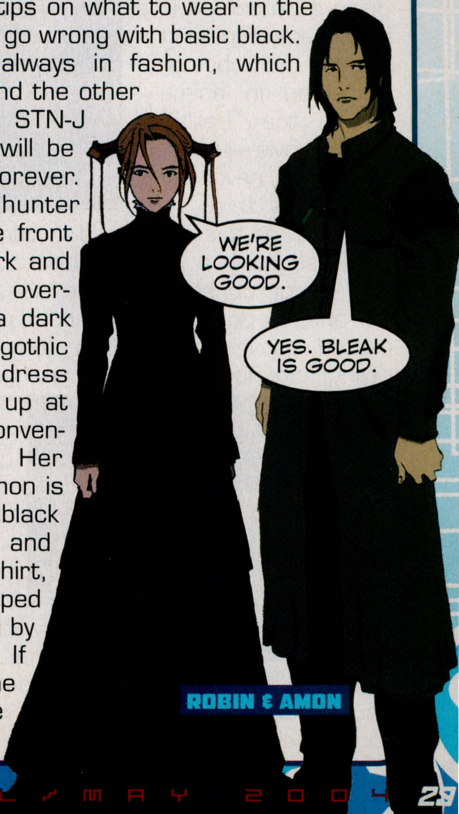


MITSURUGI

BEST DRESSED

ROBIN AND AMON, 'WITCH HUNTER ROBIN' (Bandai)

If you're looking for tips on what to wear in the workplace, you can't go wrong with basic black. It's a color that's always in fashion, which means that Robin and the other members of the STN-J witch-hunting team will be fashionable forever. Pyrokinetic witch hunter Robin stands at the front of goth fashion—dark and stylish, but never overdone. She sports a dark coat over a black gothic pinafore-style dress (which has popped up at many an anime convention last season). Her brooding partner Amon is resplendent in his black duster, black slacks and black button-down shirt, as if he were ripped from a *GQ* published by Marilyn Manson. If only everyone at the *Anime Insider* office could look this good!



WE'RE LOOKING GOOD.

YES. BLEAK IS GOOD.

ROBIN & AMON

BEST DVD SERIES 'READ OR DIE'

(Manga Entertainment)

Given the choice between reading and dying, we suggest you watch. Putting "Read or Die" in your DVD player—all three OVA episodes have been conveniently stored on one disc—is one of the best favors you can ever do for yourself.

The library may be a place for quiet, but the British Library Task Force is a place for quietly saving the world from freakish reincarnations of historical authors who've come to

A BUG'S STRIFE Historical figures terrorizing Tokyo on giant grasshoppers is only how 'R.O.D.' starts.

take over the world by thieving highly powerful books. Their main agent is shy bibliophile Yomiko Readman, a.k.a. the Paper, who has psychic control over...um...paper. (And not coincidentally, he wears the same glasses as writer/creator Hideyuki Kurata).

Of course, this plot synopsis barely scrapes the surface of the sheer awe "Read or Die" inspires in its viewers. Just try to keep your jaw from dropping as Yomiko

creates a giant paper airplane to chase down megalomaniacal *nth*-level historical figures like Otto Lillienthal, the German "Glider King," through the New York City skyline, ending with Lillienthal chained to the Statue of Liberty, turning into a tetherball of fiery doom. And that's just episode one!

Sound goofy? Definitely, but "Read or Die" is a masterful example of everything great about anime. It takes its bizarre but superbly well-planned premise and executes it with gleeful perfection. The animation quality is astounding, the level of detail is staggering (check out the neo-Victorian cell phone used by the Library!) and the story is as supremely entertaining as any Spielberg film. Watch "Read or Die;" you can read later.



BEST DEATH GUARD, 'PATLABOR WXIII'

(Pioneer Entertainment)

Being a policeman is a fine, upstanding thing in society, but being a policeman in anime—like in the "Patlabor WXIII" movie—just plain sucks. You never know what crazy thing you'll face next, as this poor guy discovers too late.



Investigating a power failure at the Babylon Project land bridge construction site, the guard and some fellow officers don't find a terrorist plot like they first suspected, but instead discover something a lot more terrifying and ridiculous: a hungry, genetically engineered



THE TOOTH HURTS This scene is even better if you hum the 'Jaws' theme.

monster boosted with growth hormones and cancer genes, which makes Godzilla look like Barney.

Bullets don't hurt the beast, and since the guard is paralyzed with fear to the spot, he's neatly devoured in

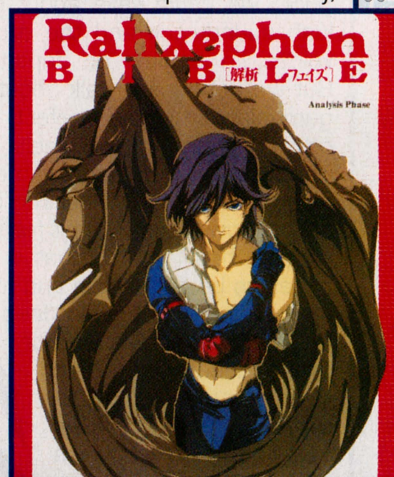
one gulp. It's gruesome, it's absurdly hilarious and it's perfect. So, Mr. Policeman, whoever you are, we salute your passing!

BEST BOOK RAHXEPHON BIBLE

(ADV Manga)

The good thing about anime art books is that they're filled with great images from your favorite shows. The bad thing is that, unless you can read Japanese fluently,

you have no idea what's written next to the pictures. Is there an explanation about a plot point? Are there interviews with the creative staff? You had no way of deciphering art book text...until now. ADV Manga came to the rescue of the non-Japanese-literate fan when it released the translated version of the *RahXephon* art book last summer. With a layout like the original (that is, reading right to left), a *RahXephon* fan can check out character designs, read plot synopses, learn the secrets of the mech designs and more, all without having to know a lick of Japanese. For the sake of our wallets, we can only hope that more translated art books will come out in 2004.



BIBLE STUDY Packed with facts and artwork, we want more anime books like this.

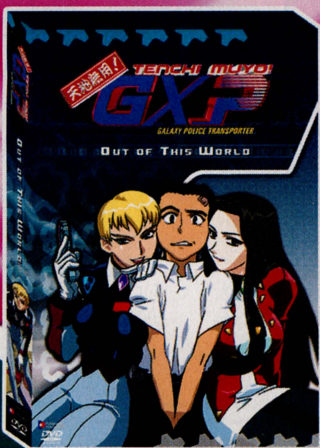
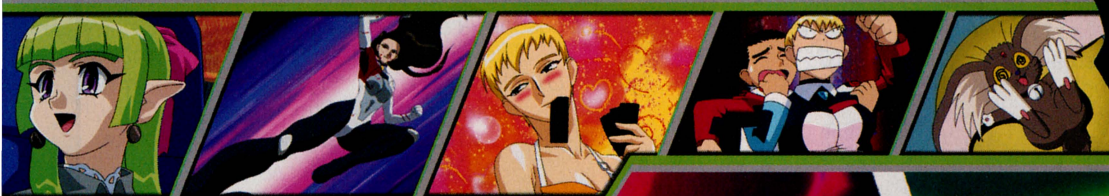
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and quadruples the zaniness."

--Rob Bricken - Anime Insider Magazine

From the
director of
Excel
Saga!

Seina Yamada is your common 15 year old boy with one
uncommon ability: bad luck. He can't get through a day without
causing serious harm to himself and those around him. So what
in the universe do two gorgeous Galaxy Police officers want to
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BEST
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BEST MANGA 'GREAT TEACHER ONIZUKA' (TOKYOPOP)

In case you haven't been exposed to the hilarity of *Great Teacher Onizuka* in one of its many forms, don't look here for a series about selfless teachers showing kids the glories of learning. "Dead Poets Society," it ain't.

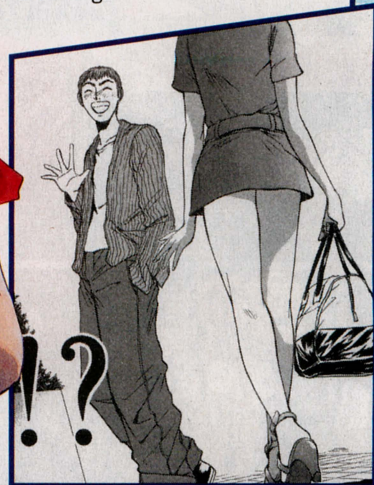
Manga-ka Tohru Fujisawa instead makes his unruly, ex-punk teacher lust after schoolgirls, give the vice-principal a German suplex and has him wear costumes to class—at best, a monkey outfit; at worst, cartoon-elephant shorts with a trunk that actually sprays water...on a prominent councilman's wife. That's just a sampling of the trouble Onizuka gets himself into; in 2003 alone, he was framed for stealing millions in school funds, corralled into taking the entire junior class to far-off Okinawa for a field trip and forced to arm-wrestle 100 men in a row. His fellow teachers either want him fired...or want him dead.

HOT FOR TEACHER Onizuka may be loud, crass, perverted, dangerous and his students might not learn anything, but he's our Educator of the Year.



All in all, *GTO* has been the best read of 2003. We figure a lot of that's due to translator/adaptor Dan Papia. We don't envy him his task, since each page is covered with small dialogue asides and notes, but we sure do appreciate the mountain of work he must do for each volume. And he still manages to make the already laugh-out-loud funny series even more gut-busting—no small feat.

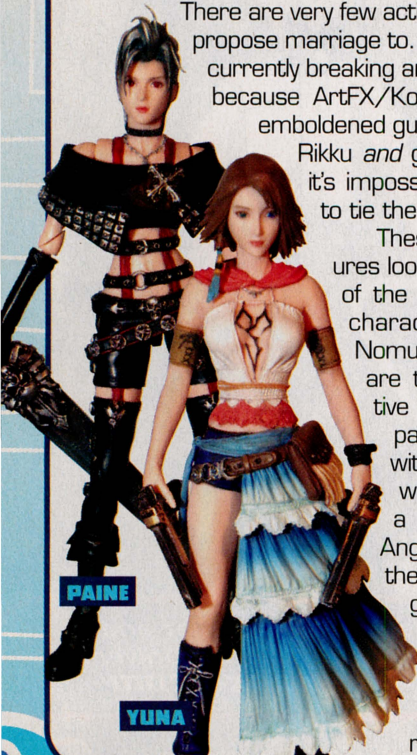
The only way TOKYOPOP could make *GTO* better is by bringing over Fujisawa's earlier manga *Shonan Junai Gumi*, which features a younger Onizuka. You listening?



BEST ACTION FIGURES 'FINAL FANTASY X-2' (ArtFX/Kotobukiya)

There are very few action figures that we'd like to propose marriage to. The only reason we're not currently breaking any state matrimony laws is because ArtFX/Kotobukiya made figures of emboldened gunfighter Yuna, spunky thief Rikku and gruff warrior Paine, so it's impossible to choose which one to tie the knot with.

These stunningly sculpted figures look like they were ripped out of the pages of *FFX* and *FFX-2* character designer Tetsuya Nomura's sketchbook—not only are they perfectly representative of their digital counterparts, but they're brimming with personality. And they're well-articulated, replicating a variety of the "Charlie's Angels"-esque power poses the trio strike throughout the game. Plus, although it's a bit obvious, they're downright beautiful. It's a good thing they don't make tiny engagement rings is all we're saying.



BEST SWAG EIN PLUSH DOLL (Bandai Entertainment)

"Cowboy Bebop" follows the adventures of Spike, Jet, Faye and Edward, but most fans of the hugely popular TV series and movie usually forget about the cutest—and furriest—member of that motley crew: Ein!

We're still not sure what exactly a Data Dog is, but we do know he's got the brains and the looks on the ship. Who could resist the golden-brown and white furry critter?

Not many otaku, apparently. Still topping online retailers' best-seller lists after we showed him off in issue #9, the 11-inch Ein plush sold out at anime conventions nationwide faster than you could say "Ganymede."

They may have kidnapped him from an illegal research facility, but you can still smuggle him into your home for \$14.99, thanks to the Internet.



水



I TEST MYSELF BY TESTING OTHERS. KAIJUDO.

闘



Catch the Action On
CARTOON NETWORK

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BEST MOVIE 'TOKYO GODFATHERS' (Columbia Tri-Star)

Take three homeless people, add a miracle baby and set it during Christmas in Tokyo, and what do you get? Satoshi Kon's theatrical wonder called "Tokyo Godfathers." Based on the 1948 John Ford flick "Three Godfathers" (which itself was a remake of one of Ford's previous silent films), Kon premiered the movie at the Big Apple Anime Fest last August to a crowd of anime fans who gave the film a standing ovation and it was rightly deserved.

Kon's film deftly combines humor, pathos, tragedy and thrills in a story infused with both a Western and Eastern aesthetic. He told *Anime Insider* he didn't have an agenda when he made "Godfathers," yet his depiction of the plight of the homeless in Japan is sympathetic without being preachy. Main characters Gin (a former gambler), Hana (a transvestite) and Miyuki (a teenage runaway) are

wonderfully well-rounded characters, and as you follow their individual tales, you're drawn in by their humanity and realism. "Godfathers" is the kind of movie that, in other directors' hands, could fall victim to schmaltz, but not so with Kon. In fact, distributor Columbia Tri-Star believes in this movie so

strongly that it released the film in a few Los Angeles-based theaters last December just so it would be eligible for an Oscar nomination.

Whether or not it wins an Academy Award, this is one movie that may transcend and transform the genre of animated films.



BRINGING UP BABY Miyuki marvels at Kana's lapse of motherhood above; right, Gin and Miyuki can't believe baby needs changing...again!



BEST SIGN THAT ANIME HAS CONQUERED AMERICA 'TEEN TITANS' (Cartoon Network)

American cartoons are shaking in their big, goofy superhero booties. Anime and manga have been trouncing U.S. comic and cartoon sales all throughout 2003—and Warner Brothers thinks they just might be doing something right. Enter "Teen Titans," a 37-year-old comic book property that became the best American-made cartoon on the market by infusing its young superheroes Robin (the Boy Wonder!), kawaii alien Starfire, the cyborg Cyborg, dark sorceress Raven and shape-shifting Beast Boy with as much anime style as possible. This includes trademark anime veins in the head when they're mad, speed lines during fights, huge heads during arguments, sweat drops when embarrassed and big, big eyes. They even got an opening theme by J-pop queens Puffy AmiYumi. We dare you to get it, or this show, out of your head.



BEST SOUNDTRACK 'HELLSING' ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK 1: RAID (Pioneer Entertainment)

It was a great year for music-loving anime fans, as anime soundtracks finally hit America full-force. But even with so much new anime music to listen to, no soundtrack managed to rock like "Hellsing OST Vol. 1: Raid."



Composer Yasushi Ishii (who played the minor role of Brad on "Trigun") did a great job with all 19 tracks, successfully alternating rip-roaring goth metal numbers with a jazzy blues piano, then adding haunting serenades full of longing. Edgy, reverberating guitar ballads are juxtaposed with

acoustic piano elegies and then occasionally fused together for a sound reminiscent of a Quentin Tarantino movie score. Every track is worthy as a single, however, and makes the perfect background music for anything in general, but rocking in specific. And that's something we can really sink our teeth into.

燃



my inner strength is my greatest weapon. kaijudo.

水



kaijudo.com

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BEST FIGHT GOKU VS. KING PICCOLO, 'DRAGON BALL'

(FUNimation)

In his long history, Goku has saved Earth countless times. Who knew the first time would be the coolest? Fans of the original "Dragon Ball" must have been shocked to see a bad guy actually kill main characters in the wacky action-adventure series. It was definitely a shock for Goku—but he vowed to avenge the deaths of his buddy Krillin and his teacher Roshi by killing their murderer, the Demon King Piccolo, who's so powerful that he destroys a whole city with a swipe of his arm!

Goku meets Piccolo in a four-episode-long brawl, the outcome of which is never clear. Piccolo eventually breaks one of Goku's arms and both his legs, leaving him near lifeless on the ground. But when the demon rises into the air for his ultimate attack, Goku channels all his energy into one final blast from his one good arm, launching him into the air and through Piccolo's stomach! This brawl forces even the most jaded DB fans to sit on the edge of their seats. It's pure action entertainment, mate-



BEAT NO EVIL King Piccolo was the first villain to kill major 'Dragon Ball' characters, which is why Goku has to lay the smack down.

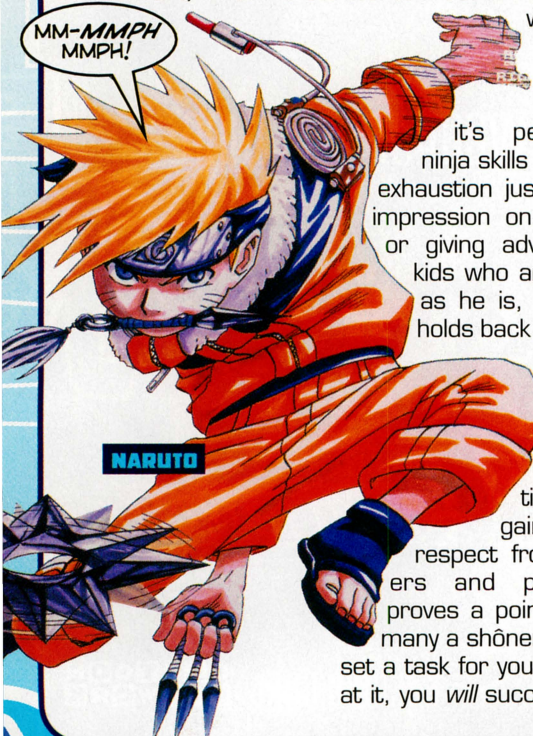
ialized as a DVD. And it's a special treat for DB fans when they realize the heroic Piccolo of "Dragon Ball Z" is none other than King Piccolo's son!

BEST HERO NARUTO, 'NARUTO' (Viz)

When it comes to performing heroic acts and deeds, none match up to Shonen Jump's kid ninja Naruto. Infused with a destructive kitsune ("fox spirit") at birth, Naruto starts his hero's journey alone, bereft of family and friends. Any normal person who's shunned by his peers and hated by adults would develop grudges, but not him. In his heart, what Naruto wants most is respect, and he

will work his hardest to obtain it.

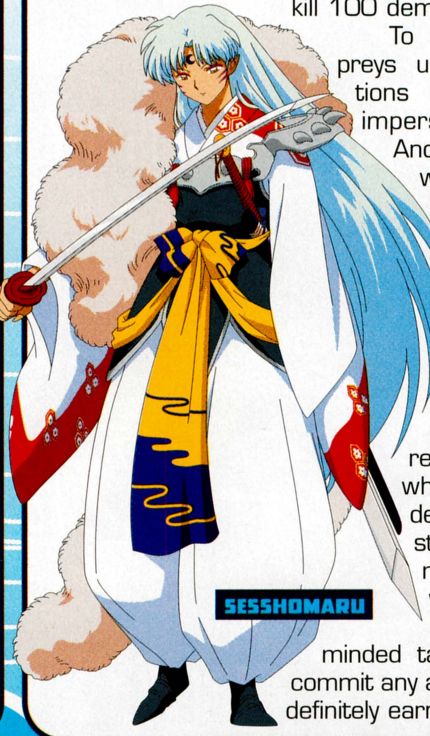
Whether it's perfecting his ninja skills to the point of exhaustion just to make an impression on his teachers or giving advice to young kids who are just as lost as he is, Naruto never holds back because he knows that he must never stop trying his hardest. Over time, he does gain a grudging respect from his teachers and peers, which proves a point common to many a shōnen series: if you set a task for yourself and keep at it, you *will* succeed.



BEST VILLAIN SESSHOMARU, 'INUYASHA' (Viz)

If there's anything you could say about human-hating Sesshomaru, it's that he's definitely not his brother's keeper. The all-demon half-brother to Inuyasha, it is his goal to kill Inuyasha and take back what Sesshomaru feels is his birthright: the Tetsusaiga, a blade that can kill 100 demons with one swing!

To do this, Sesshomaru preys upon Inuyasha's emotions by having a demon impersonate his mother. And when that doesn't work, he and makes a deal with Naraku, the demon who drove a wedge between Inuyasha and his human love Kikyo. Okay, so maybe Sesshomaru later brings a little human girl back to life and refuses to kill Inuyasha when he's under a demonic state, but that still doesn't excuse his misdeeds. Because he will stop at nothing to complete his single-minded task, use anyone and commit any atrocity, Sesshomaru's definitely earned this spot.



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自然



MY CREATURES WILL NEVER SURRENDER. KAIJUDO.

永



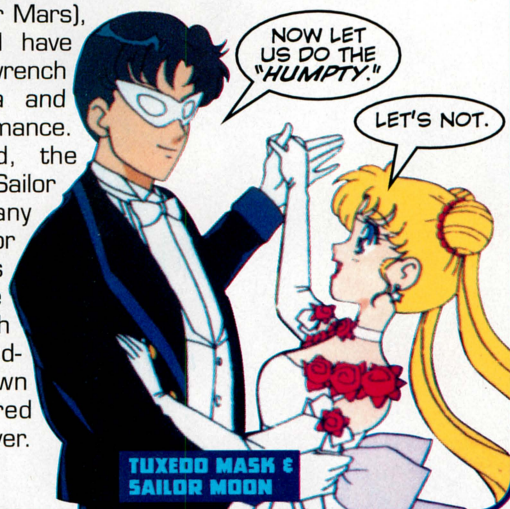
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BEST ROMANCE 'SAILOR MOON' (ADV Films)

Hardcore "Sailor Moon" fans had a reason to cheer—and empty out their wallets—last year when ADV released the magical-girl series uncut and subtitled in the form of two huge boxed sets. Why? Because for the first time, fans could watch the true story of Darien and Serena's romance unfurl! "Sailor Moon" was heavily edited when it came to U.S. television in September 1995, and as a result, viewers weren't getting the impact of the whole story. In the uncut release, they can watch Serena grow into her powers and responsibilities, with entire episodes dedicated to her solo efforts as Sailor Moon, learning more about her powers, the mysterious man known as Tuxedo Mask and the college student Darien. Also noteworthy is the fleshing out of the initial romance between Darien and Raye (a.k.a. Sailor Mars), which could have thrown a wrench into Serena and Darien's romance. In the end, the power of Sailor Moon's many sacrifices for her friends and the fate of Earth (even including her own life!) snared Darien forever.



TUXEDO MASK & SAILOR MOON

BEST DUB 'FRUITS BASKET' (FUNimation)

The days of awful English dubs may be over thanks to people like Justin Cook, ADR director of the shōjo series "Fruits Basket." Somehow people like Cook manage the miraculous feat of making a dub better than the Japanese original.

"Fruits Basket" is the tale of the preposterously good-hearted Tohru, who meets the cursed Sohma family, who all turn into symbols of the Chinese zodiac when hugged by a member of the opposite sex. It's a credit to Cook and his crew that every family member has their own distinct, fully developed personality, especially the massive pile of bishonen. Extra credit goes to voice actress Laura Bailey for making Tohru unconditionally adorable but never annoying, as well as script writer John Burgmeister, who provides script that's so funny, fresh and natural you'll actually forget it's animated. (Burgmeister also does a sterling job voicing author/dog Shigure.) Besides the ongoing "Yu Yu Hakusho," Cook will direct "Kiddy Grade" for FUNimation next. We just want to say thanks for the chance to not have to read our anime.

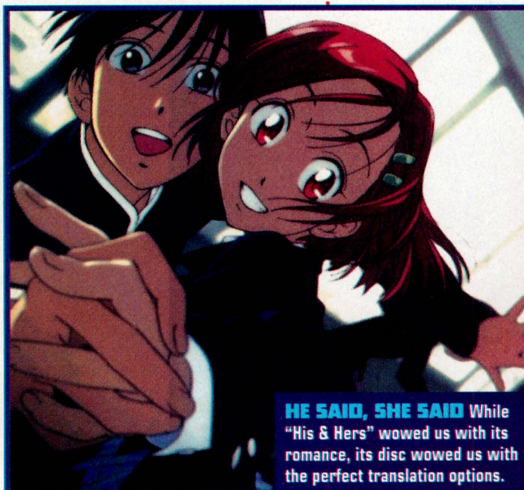


BASKET FULL You'll love to hear Shigure, Yuki, Tohru and Kyo (clockwise from top) speak the Queen's English.

BEST DVD FEATURE LANGUAGE OPTIONS, 'HIS AND HER CIRCUMSTANCES' (Right Stuf)

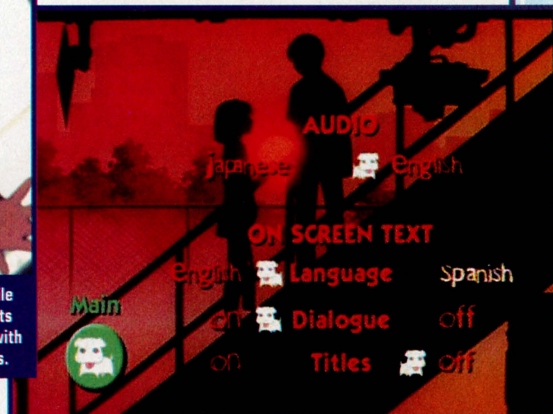
Right Stuf's language/subtling system for the romantic masterpiece "His and Her Circumstances" doesn't have a fancy name, but it is divine. Four options await you at Set Up: first, the language switches the audio track from the English dub to Japanese, including the language of the "don't-sit-too-close" warning before each episode, the credits and the next episode preview—no small task. See, in Japan, the actresses who voiced Yukino's little sisters read the preview but filmed them live; by hitting English, you get the American voice actresses doing the same!

And that's just option one! Option two picks subtitles in



HE SAID, SHE SAID While "His and Hers" wowed us with its romance, its disc wowed us with the perfect translation options.

English or Spanish; option three turns 'em on or off; option four—the real miracle—translates all on-screen text. (If you've seen director Hideaki Anno's previous work, "Evangelion," you know he loves on-screen text.) It also handles the countless on-screen text thoughts, signs and notes. You can watch all 26 episodes of "His and Her" and never fail to understand what's being communicated. On the DVD, Right Stuf boasts that while most DVDs have only around 9,000 lines of subtitle code, "His and Her" has 300,000. Some DVD players just weep when "His and Her" gets near.



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Sorcerer Hunters & Gate Keepers)

Animation by: **GONZO**
(Hellsing, Full Metal Panic!, Vandread,
Gate Keepers & Last Exile)



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www.tenchimuyogxp.com



BEST GIANT ROBOT THE BIG O, 'THE BIG O II' (Bandai)

If you've been a "Big O" fan all along, then there's no real need to explain to you why the Big O is everything right about giant robots. You already *understand*.

A megadeus robot piloted by Paradigm City's best negotiator, Roger Smith, the Big O is a certifiable badass and a celebration of machismo over mechanics, à la the improbable mecha of '70s Japan. From his tiny, see-through noggin to his gargantuan, Popeye-like forearms which administer piston-powered punches to other nefarious robots; from his "Chromebuster Cannon" to his eye lasers, the Big O is a huge hunk of metal mecha retro, and we love it!

Yeah, maybe "The Big O" is just basic robot-on-robot action, but that's exactly why we adore it. It also helps that "The Big O II" is a milestone for anime in America, existing only through the efforts of Cartoon Network and Bandai Entertainment (the USA division), who decided the original 13-episode series needed a sequel, especially since it ended on a cliffhanger. That's why you should watch it, too—all the whomp-ass robot action is just icing on the cake.



ARM AND HAMMER The O isn't the only big thing about The Big O. Check out those forearms!

BEST OF THE REST THE OTHER AWARDS WE DIDN'T HAVE ROOM FOR

BEST KISS: KEITARO AND NARU FROM 'LOVE HINA AGAIN' (Bandai)



It's been a long and difficult road for lovebirds Naru Narusegawa and Keitarou Urashima, but after meddling rivals, awkward moments and constantly denying her feelings, Naru finally professes her love and kisses Keitaro—on purpose, and with no accidental groping.

BEST SMALL ROBOT: CANTI FROM 'FLCL' (Synch-Point)

Half-homeless robot, half total robo-badass, Canti spends his time picking up the groceries and putting Medical Mechanica bad boys on their butts. Too cool for any school.

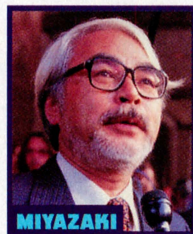
BEST DVD PACK-IN: THE PANTIES FROM 'NAJICA BLITZ TACTICS' (ADV Films)

In an anime where panty shots occur as often as dialogue, there were two bonuses: a plot and a free pair of one-size-fits-all panties. We'd say shame on ADV, but they're so comfy...



BLOOD DONOR OF THE YEAR: BOSS MATSUMOTO FROM 'KILL BILL' (Miramax)

A human being is supposed to have about ten pints of blood; Boss Matsumoto, we figure, has about 16 gallons, and high enough blood pressure to re-paint his apartment when the young O-Ren kills him in Quentin Tarantino's action extravaganza.



QUOTE OF THE YEAR: "JAPANESE CULTURE IS DOOMED."

Said by "Spirited Away" director Hayao Miyazaki, upon discovering a young co-worker doesn't know how an eel squirms when gutted in the Nippon TV documentary on the "Spirited Away" DVD.

BEST PSYCHOANALYSIS SESSION: LUPIN THE 3RD FROM 'MYSTERY OF MAMO' (Pioneer)

What's on Lupin's mind when madman Mamo uses his ghastly machine to read it? Naked women in generic, naked Fujiko in specific, and delicious "Orange Drink!"

WORST MOM: CHIGUSA SAKAMOTO FROM 'ANDROID KIKAIER' (Bandai)

Mitsuko doesn't get her mom flowers on Mother's Day. That's because Mom spied on Mitsuko's inventor dad (and her husband!), gave his inventions to an evil overlord, left him and her two children when they were little, and in episode 10 of "Kikaider," blows her brains out in front of Mitsuko. ■ **ROBERT BRICKEN**



GAME ON!

GHOST
FILES
YU YU HAKUSHO
TRADING CARD GAME

Gateway



DVD OF THE YEAR '*.hack//SIGN*' VOL. 1: LOGIN SPECIAL EDITION (Bandai)

The big series with the short, funny name (our spellcheckers freak out every time they see that "." in front of the title), ".hack" has earned anime accolades for being such an important (and well-executed) concept: the sinister malfunctioning of a Massively Multi-Player Online RPG called "The World," whose players occasionally *fall into comas*.

With this compelling story driving the saga, there's no better hunk of hack than ".hack//SIGN," the 26-episode TV series that aired on Cartoon Network. And there's no better version of ".hack//SIGN" than the Bandai Special Edition set for volume one titled "Login". The DVD comes boxed like an RPG treasure chest, highly appropriate considering all the goodies inside! You get the DVD, an exclusive T-shirt, a demo of the first .hack PlayStation 2 game (chronicling the later adventures of "The World" players Kite and Black Rose), several postcards of Sadamoto's art, a sticker sheet of characters Tsukasa and Mimiru, the soundtrack CD and, best of all, a plush Grunty, the digital mega-pigs players in "The World" ride to get from area to area.

Once you're done playing with all that, you can put

TSUKASA

I'M
A THIRD
LEVEL WAVE
MASTER!

in the DVD, which boasts a sterling wide-screen anamorphic format, Dolby Digital Surround Sound, an isolated musical score (done by the renowned Yuki Kajiura, who also composed the music for "Noir") audio track in Dolby Digital, an art gallery, a trailer for the video game and more.

BRAVE NEW WORLD Above, while some players want to help Tsukasa, most just want to use him. Below, you have found the ".hack//SIGN" DVD bundle treasure!

And you probably shouldn't forget that .hack//SIGN is the beginning of a great story, too. In "The World," antisocial Tsukasa realizes he has two problems: 1) he can't remember a time when he wasn't playing the game, and 2) he can't quit. While Tsukasa is befriended by several players who want to help him with his plight, oth-

ers, like the game administrators, see him as a threat. Meanwhile, illegally modified characters keep running into Tsukasa, and a mysterious girl named Aura gives him an item called The Book of the Twilight that everyone wants. Plus, "The World" is *still* knocking kids into comas. Can Tsukasa save "The World"—or even himself?

It's a question you'll want answered; .hack//SIGN and its many iterations come from the triumvirate of anime giants created by writer Kazunori Itoh ("Ghost in the Shell"), character designer Yoshiyuki Sadamoto ("Neon Genesis Evangelion") and director Koichi Mashimoto ("Noir"). This makes sense, since few others would have had the guts for a project so ambitious.

But their work pays off big in the ".hack//SIGN" DVD. If you can find it, get it. It's like the best video game in the world, only without all that leveling up.

YOU'RE AN
EIGHTH LEVEL
DORK.

MIMIRU

LOVE .HACK

A QUICK-LOADING GUIDE TO "THE WORLD"

.hack//SIGN (Bandai): This 26 episode TV series precedes the game. Tsukasa, Mimiru and Bear journey to discover the secret behind The World and the Key of the Twilight.

.hack Video games (Bandai): This epic four-game saga begins six months after "SIGN." Unable to quit The World, Kite wants to learn how his friend Orca fell into a coma, what the Book of Twilight is, and why The World is deteriorating.

.hack//LIMINALITY (Bandai): In this OVA mini-series included with each video game, Mai discovers why The World is putting people (including her boyfriend) into comas and the secret behind the Epitaph of Twilight.

.hack//DUSK (TOKYOPOP): Taking place five years after the video game, this manga stars twins Shugo and Lena who log on to The World armed with the Twilight Bracelet and no clue as to what is really going on. ■ BRIDGET M. BRADLEY

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THE AZUMANGA DAIOH YEARBOOK

Tom Root, Yearbook Advisor



Omedetou gozaimasu, minna-san! Or as Yukari-sensei taught us in English class, "Congratulations, everybody!"

Another year at our wonderful high school has come to a close. For me, it is both happy and sad, because this is my final year here at high school! Since I skipped junior high and enrolled here at age 10, this is the only high school I've known. But I'm so happy to have finally graduated, even though I already miss my teachers and fellow students!

In just three years, I've created many memories here, from competing at our annual Sports Days (where I didn't come in last, despite being 13-years-old!) and nearly overheating in that penguin costume during the Cultural Fest!

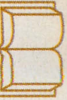
Many of my memories come out of Class 3, when I was with my wonderful friends. Together, we learned,

laughed and often annoyed each other. I can't imagine not being able to see them at school with me everyday. I'm sure you all feel the same way about your friends you've made in your classes this year!

This yearbook you hold in your hands is a commemoration of not just our fine school year; high school hasn't just given us an education, but friends and memories we'll have forever. I hope this yearbook will serve as a lifelong reminder of all the happy times we've shared together!

Chiyo Mihama

—Chiyo Mihama,
Class 3 President and teacher's pet!



We need softer, more comfortable - comfortable - nicer desks. Stay cool!

Osaka
↑ YOUR NAME'S OSAKA! GOT IT? -T.T.



AYUMU "OSAKA" KASUGA

Honorary Mention, Tug-of-War

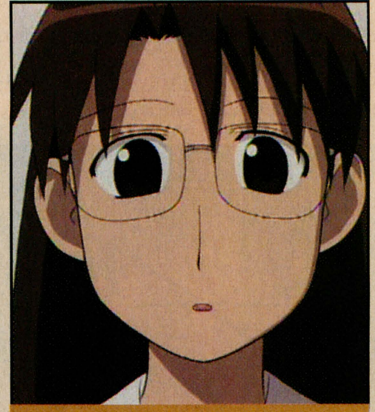
"Oh, I was just thinking about hemorrhoids."



CHIYO MIHAMA

Class President

Most likely to be Prime Minister at age 25



KOYOMI "YOMI" MIZUHARA

Bake Sale Captain

Most likely to strangle Tomo

Yo Osaka, you can't wear my pig tails! -Chiyo-Cha



TOMO TAKINO

Class Vice President

"I've got more energy than anyone!"



KAGURA

Track and Field, Swim Club

Most likely to break three-minute mile



KAORI "KAORIN"

Astronomy Club

"Don't you think Sakaki's cool?"

friends 4- ever!

Let's hang out this summer! -K



SAKAKI

Organizer, Rabies Awareness Week

Most likely to lose one or more fingers

FACULTY



Our teachers not only give grades, they make them!



MR. KIMURA

Japanese, School Director

"Why is no one wearing a swimsuit?"



MINAMO "NYAMO" KUROSAWA

Physical Education

Voted Most Popular Teacher, Best unofficial Sex Ed teacher



YUKARI TANIZAKI

English

"What you learn here won't help you after graduation!"

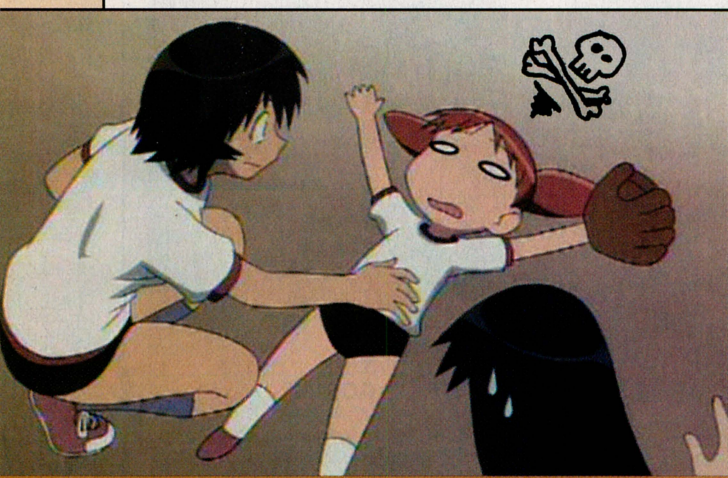
Tomo Takino
Sakaki
↑ Who wrote that? I'll get you! T.T.

2 good
2 be
4 gotten

A healthy mind is nothing without a healthy body to accompany it. Sporting events and physical education are always an important part of our school, so let's take a look back at year in sports!



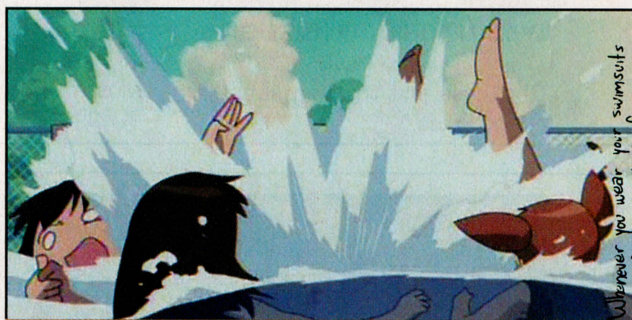
THE NAME OF THE GAME Remember, Osaka, this game is called "dodgeball." That means you have to "dodge" the ball. Ready, Osaka? Osaka?



LEISURE ACTIVITY Here, Chiyo-chan takes a break after a hard game of softball. Hmm...she looks more unconscious than asleep...



THE PUNISHER The punishment for falling asleep on the roof is running laps! Nyamo can be a harsh taskmaster! Especially to Tomo, who gets a volleyball to the noggin for being the group ringleader!



LOOK OUT BELOW! Yukari-sensei can't resist the pool on a hot day! We just wish she'd look before she leaps...



HEADS UP! Catching a softball is no problem! Just keep your eye on the ball, and—Chiyo! We said keep your eye on the ball, not your forehead!

SCHOOL LIFE

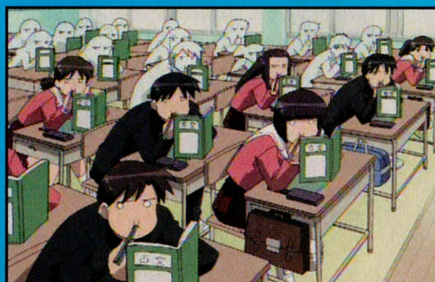
Sometimes the most riveting moments happen right in the classroom. Here are some of the wildest indoors happenings our year-book photographers were able to capture!



LET'S GET COOKIN'! It's important for all young people to learn how to prepare nutritious and satisfying meals. It's not always necessary to look the part.



UN-QUENCHED Sometimes the beverage machine runs out of cups! Or is that only for you, Tomo? It seems to work for everyone else...



LET'S EAT! Waiting until lunchtime isn't always easy, but clever camouflage can provide the perfect cover to enjoy an early meal! *Un*-clever camouflage, well...

It's a Teenage Boy's Fantasy... But It's About to Become a Nightmare!



Chitose just moved back into his deceased parents' house. But when his five gorgeous high school teachers adopt him, he's dodging discipline from his obsessively loving new "mothers" instead of lounging in the ultimate bachelor pad!



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EVENTS

CLASSFIELD TRIP

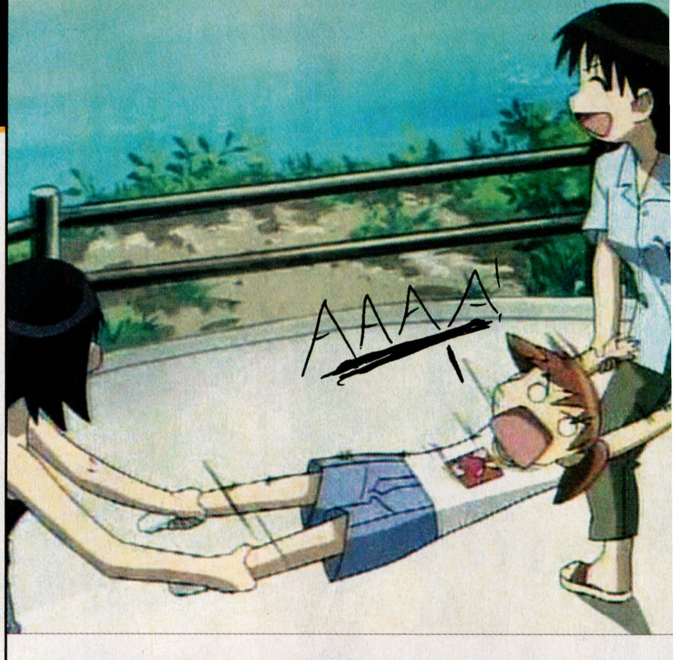
The seniors took their annual class outing, and this year it was to the fabulous island paradise of Okinawa! There were all sorts of things to see and do, and great new foods to try. Activities like scuba diving and hiking kept them busy, while many students made new friends. Okinawa was so much fun, no one wanted to return home!



JET SET The first time on an airplane can be scary for anyone, as Tomo and Kagura find out!



HELLO KITTY Sakaki makes a friend for life when a rare Iri-omote wildcat appears!



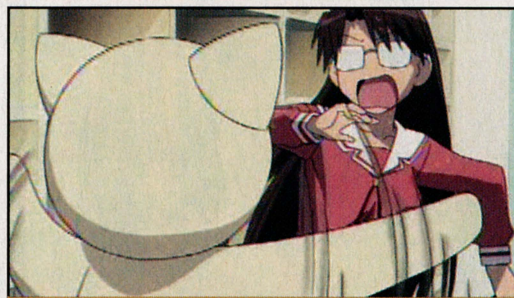
OVER THE EDGE Chiyo-chan is so light it's easy to pick her up! It's also easy for Tomo and Yukari-sensei to pretend they're going to throw her over a cliff.

CARNIVAL

Nothing beats a good carnival! Each class gets to decorate its classroom with something fun for the whole school to enjoy! Costumes make the whole experience even more joyful, unless they fall into the wrong hands! And we think you know who we're talking about!



SHOCK AND AWE Chiyo and Sakaki are surprised to learn who snagged the costume!



WILD CAT In costume, Tomo applies her usual level of enthusiasm. Terrifying them is one way to get the word out!



VICTORY! Every successful carnival should end with a dance, to celebrate a job well done!

CULTURAL FESTIVAL

What's the best way for your class to attract customers at the annual Cultural Festival? You need a hook! Class 3 came up with a cute café, where everyone wore adorable cat hats, and had a masterful advertising plan by using its natural resource—the cuteness factor of Class 3 president Chiyo-chan!



ON THE PROWL Chiyo-chan does a little advertising in front of a rival class' taiyaki shop!



ANTI-KAWAII Cat hats are cute, but not the lecherous Kimura-sensei!



ACTING PUSHY Sakaki's natural reaction to something cute is to hug it, but Yukari-sensei clearly gets different urges.

These brides kick butt!



Hold on to your corsages! Love is on the run as the deliciously wicked Lady Raindevila conspires to rid the world of romance and love. Only the legendary Love Angel Wedding Peach and her battling bridesmaids have the power to once again make the universe safe for sweethearts everywhere!

The honeymoon begins March 9th.

Volume 1: Collector's Edition also available!

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ADV
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FREAK OUT! A lost cat is no reason to get upset, but try telling that to Sakaki and Kaorin!



FLOWER POWER Kaorin tries the "loves-me, loves-me-not" routine to see if she'll escape Kimura-sensei's class.



IT'S CONTAGIOUS Chiyo, Osaka and Tomo practice to achieve "the perfect yawn!" Er...way to apply yourselves, girls!



SHARE ALIKE Yomi asks for some of Tomo's delicious yakisoba bread, Tomo naturally does the generous thing...and eats it all herself!



THANKS BUT NO THANKS Kimura-sensei shares his homemade design for the new festival mascot.



ONCOMING DISASTER Tomo, stop! This is a very expensive camera! You're going to run right into it! Tomo! Tomo! [Crash]



CAT SLAP FEVER When Kagura rushes over to terrify the poor cats away, she accidentally catches a puss square in the puss!



BEST FRIENDS Yomi and Tomo have been in the same class together since they were children!



HEAD ACHE Uh-oh, Chiyo-chan! We know talking to Osaka can make people a little nutty, but calm down!

RUNBY-SIGNING!

WRATH OF YUKARI



Our favorite teacher isn't afraid to live candidly! Beware her special education!



WRATH OF YUKARI #1 When Yukari-sensei gets in one of her bad moods, it's best to stay out of her way! Here, Nyamo-sensei is in the wrong place at the wrong time.



WRATH OF YUKARI #2 Chiyo-chan is next in line to suffer one of Yukari-sensei's violent rages. Oh, it looks like that hurt, Chiyo-chan!



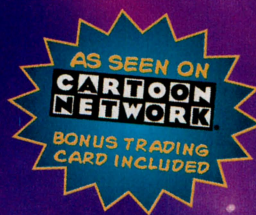
WRATH OF YUKARI #3 Even Yomi isn't immune to the cruel hand of Yukari-sensei! Who will stop this rampage?!



WRATH OF YUKARI #4 Oh, Tomo...as if Yukari-sensei wasn't mad enough! Getting whacked in the face with a lunch tray really isn't going to improve her mood!



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BEST IN SHOW



WHAT MAKES THE PERFECT PET? WE RANK THE TOP 10 ANIME ANIMALS.

Behind every great anime hero is a talking cat, electric rat or... what *are* these things anyway?

Anyone who's a fan of "Cowboy Bebop" knows the real star of the show is Ein, the Welsh corgi data dog. Many other anime shows have animal co-stars who steal the spotlight from the heroes and villains.

But who is the best looking and best behaved of all these anime pets and sidekicks? Executive director of the International Society of Canine Cosmetologists Pam Lauritzen took at our zoological roundup and picked the prize pets!

1. PIKACHU

SPECIES: *Mus fulminis*

OWNER: Ash Ketchum ("Pokémon")

JUDGE'S SPECIAL AWARD: Best Trained

PEDIGREE REPORT: For all the times that it's difficult with Ash, Pikachu's skill in battle impressed Lauritzen, who calls it "well-trained and highly responsive." If pokémon like Pikachu were available in pet shops, our expert glows that they'd be "prized possessions, valued for their extraordinary skills," similar to golden retrievers. As long as they don't zap the neighbors.

2. EIN

SPECIES: *Canis familiaris* (Welsh corgi)

OWNER: Ed ("Cowboy Bebop")

JUDGE'S SPECIAL AWARD: Most Resourceful

PEDIGREE REPORT: As a Welsh corgi, Lauritzen says that he's an average example of the breed. "Ein is a bit rough on the edges and looks very swayed in the top line. He's an average Pembroke, but he has a nice head," she remarks. However, Ein's behaviors were stellar. "He seeks to protect himself, but doesn't display any aggressive behavior...he's not too self-absorbed." The crew of the Bebop should provide this data dog with what he needs: "A loving, caring home and protect him from evil doers, because poor Ein seems to have a real problem with that!" Lauritzen laughs.



3. LUNA

SPECIES: *Felis domestica*

OWNER: Serena ("Sailor Moon")

JUDGE'S AWARD: Most Likely to Succeed

PEDIGREE REPORT: Pet store owners should be glad that a talking cat like Luna really doesn't exist, according to Lauritzen: "Everybody would want one and would want to have control of them." In fact, Lauritzen sympathizes with Serena's authoritarian pet, saying, "I'm not sure a talking cat could live in this environment because everybody would be after it!" Still, with her extraordinary perception and her behavior, Luna's smart enough to elude the most vicious of pet-nappers—even if Serena isn't.



4. HAMTARO

SPECIES: *Mesocricetus auratus*

OWNER: Laura Haruna ("Hamtaro")

JUDGE'S SPECIAL AWARD: Most Ambitious

PEDIGREE REPORT: The little hamster with the big adventures is a hit with Lauritzen who praises him for being "a good pet, cuddly and friendly." Though he does things like chew on owner Laura's homework from time to time, Lauritzen explains that "news-paper chewing is not untypical of what a golden hamster might do." Lauritzen says Laura's on the right track to making a prize-winner out of Hamtaro, prescribing "love him, brush him weekly and control his diet."



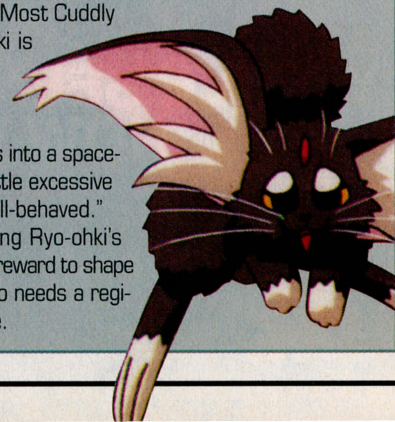
5. RYO-OHKI

SPECIES: *Cunicufelix navalis lucis*

OWNER: Ryoko ("Tenchi Muyo!")

JUDGE'S SPECIAL AWARD: Most Cuddly

PEDIGREE REPORT: "Ryo-ohki is a good pet; she seems very cuddly," our expert says of the half-cat, half-rabbit (A.K.A. "cabbit") which also transforms into a spaceship, adding that she was "a little excessive about carrots, but overall well-behaved." Lauritzen suggested improving Ryo-ohki's behavior by "using carrots as a reward to shape desired behavior." Ryo-ohki also needs a regimen of daily skin and coat care.





SPECIES: *Eudvptes crestata*

OWNER: Misato Katsuragi ("Neon Genesis Evangelion")

JUDGE'S AWARD: Most Observant

PEDIGREE REPORT: As a survivor of an apocalyptic event, warm water penguin Pen-Pen “seemed well-behaved, self-sufficient, house-trained and highly observant. He doesn’t seem to need any pet therapy, unless the owner plans to release him back to his natural habitat,” Lauritzen criticizes owner Misato for raising him in a cramped apartment, even though his natural environment was obliterated. “I would recommend a swimming pool because he needs a place to swim. A penguin would need a little more space than the family bathtub,” she advises.

SPECIES: *Canis familiaris*

OWNER: Excel Excel ("Excel Saga")

JUDGE'S AWARD: Most Likely to be a Cat

PEDIGREE REPORT: The emergency food supply of the secret organization ACROSS confuses Lauritzen. "I don't think she looks like a dog; I think she looks like a cat," she scoffs. Lauritzen adds that Menchi needs to be able to re-establish her faith and trust in humanity. A better owner than Excel would "be patient, reassuring, provide love and security, and not betray that poor little pet," Lauritzen condemns.

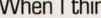


SPECIES: *Animus silvati*

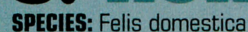
OWNER: Lonely children anywhere ("My Neighbor Totoro")

JUDGE'S SPECIAL AWARD: Most Scary

PEDIGREE REPORT: The forest-dwelling Totoro took Lauritzen by surprise.



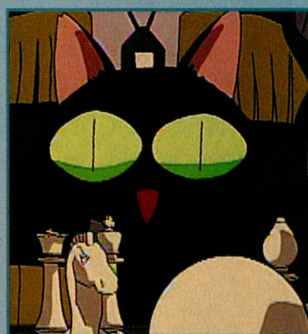
"When I think of a dust bunny, I think of something smaller than a person. This one was much bigger than a person!" she laughs. Totoro got the "Most Scary" award "because of its size, how it would growl, and its large stomping actions." But then why weren't Mei and Satsuki unafraid of him? "I don't know why Mei loved it!" she exclaims. Mayhap our expert needs more exposure to giant forest spirits.



OWNER: Unlucky people ("Trigun")

JUDGE'S SPECIAL AWARD: Most Likely to Be Unlikely

PEDIGREE REPORT: Lauritzen says of the ever-wandering Kurneko, "You never know where or how he's going to behave when he turns up." The cat was a "non-desirable pet," adding "Most animals that end up in the Humane Society are unpredictable." Still, he is not without his charms; a loving owner could rehabilitate him by giving him a home, being patient with him and "introducing him to people and new things."



SPECIES: Pan troglodyte

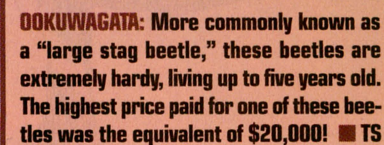
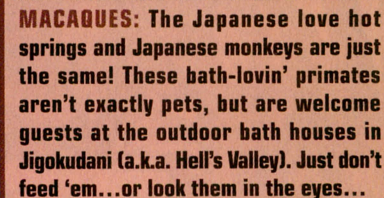
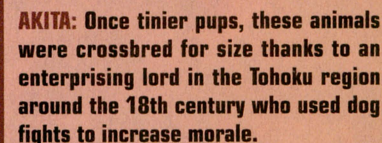
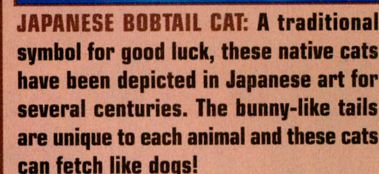
OWNER: King Kai ("Dragon Ball Z")

JUDGE'S SPECIAL AWARD: Worst Nightmare

PEDIGREE REPORT: King Kai's carefree chimp-cum-training exercise strikes a chord of horror with Lauritzen. "He's difficult to control and poorly trained," she comments, citing his "strong freedom reflexes and flight tendencies." She also doesn't think much of Goku's attempts to catch him. "If Goku had used food as a reward, he could have enticed Bubbles and maybe trapped him that way." The pointy-eared, long-tailed chimp gets better points from Lauritzen in the grooming department, but she wonders, "If you can't catch him, how can you groom him?"



Thought a cabbit was strange? Check out these Japanese zoological oddities!



The ANIME INSIDER Preview of

D•N•ANGEL

Everyone knows puberty bites. For Daisuke Niwa, it bit *hard*.

In addition to having to deal with cracking vocal chords and growth spurts, Daisuke also has to deal with a wacky family curse: whenever he sees his crush Risa, he morphs into the older daredevil thief known as Dark Mousy. Now Daisuke is avoiding Risa while Dark is avoiding the law—never has a case of body switching been more confusing!

D•N•ANGEL is one of the quirkiest coming-of-age titles since *FLCL* and one of the most beautiful works from the pen of prolific artist/writer Yukiru Sugisaki (*BrainPowered*, *Candidate for Goddess*). A huge fan-favorite hit in Japan and America for years, TOKYOPOP's English version of the manga is at last hitting our shores April 6 in their 100% Authentic Manga format (reading in the original right-to-left with unchanged Japanese sound effects) and planned for a snug bimonthly release.

Although the story of *D•N•ANGEL* may begin as a funny but simple supernatural tale, fulfilling the family legacy of spectacular thievery while sharing a body and mind with an opposing personality proves both difficult and profound for growing Daisuke. His involvement in a love quadrangle with Dark and classmates Risa and her twin Riku doesn't help simplify things, either.

"The tone of *D•N•ANGEL* is decidedly romantic-comedy with a strong fantasy element," says TOKYOPOP editor Bryce Coleman. "The plight of poor Daisuke makes for some very touching, funny, and even exciting manga." Since the issue of adapting manga titles (and any changes that might entail) is always a hot topic amongst fans, Coleman assures, "Understanding that this manga already has a large and eager fan base, we really won't be doing much in the way of heavy rewriting other than helping it be as accessible as possible."

Sugisaki's engaging plot and energetic art will most certainly continue to garner her fans in the West, as will the new "D•N•ANGEL" anime series arriving in 2004 courtesy of ADV Films. Read on for a glimpse into the upcoming adventures of Daisuke and Dark—just remember to lock up your heirlooms and never trust that Mousy smile. ■ LIANNE SENTAR

IN THESE PAGES...

The police have been alerted that the infamous Phantom Thief Dark will steal a valuable statue from the local museum and are on high alert. Meanwhile, Daisuke plans to spend his fourteenth birthday wallowing in self-pity after dodging the usual booby traps set in the house by his grandfather—something that his grandfather has done for years and has never explained why. Thinking on his crush Risa's rejection of him, Daisuke starts to feel a strange sensation come over him... ■ LS

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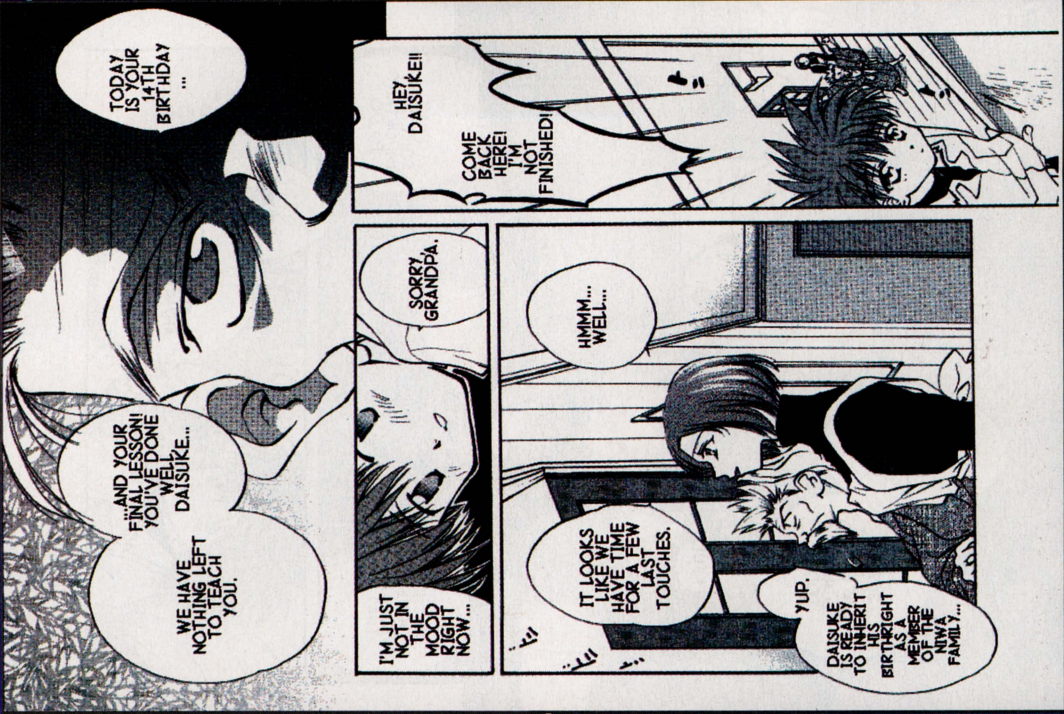
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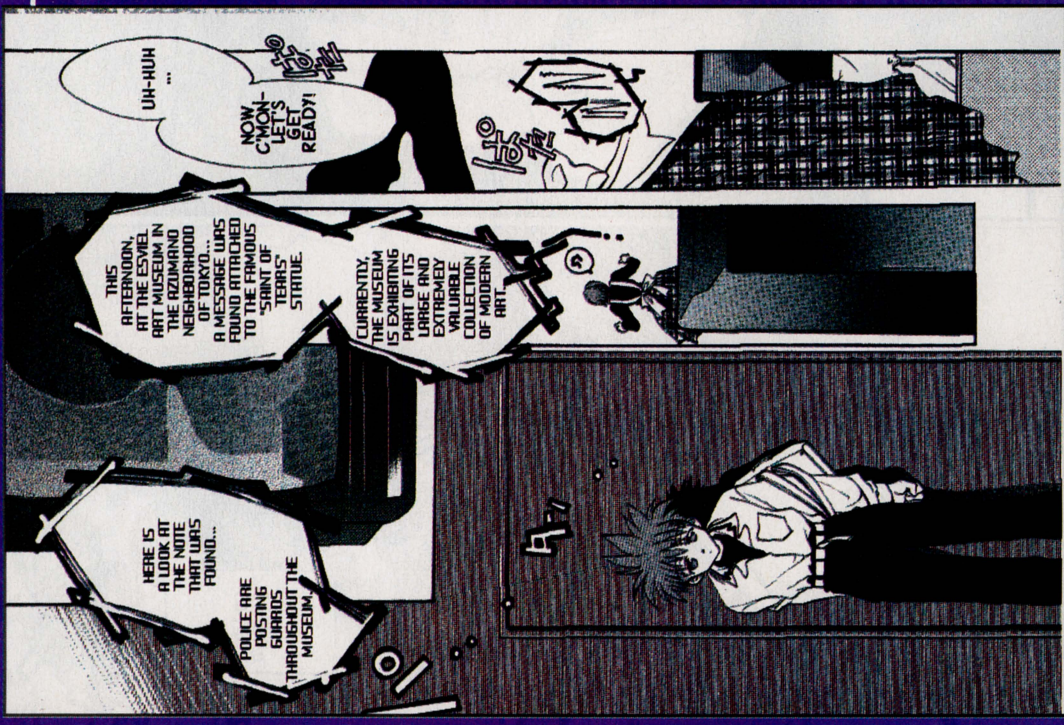
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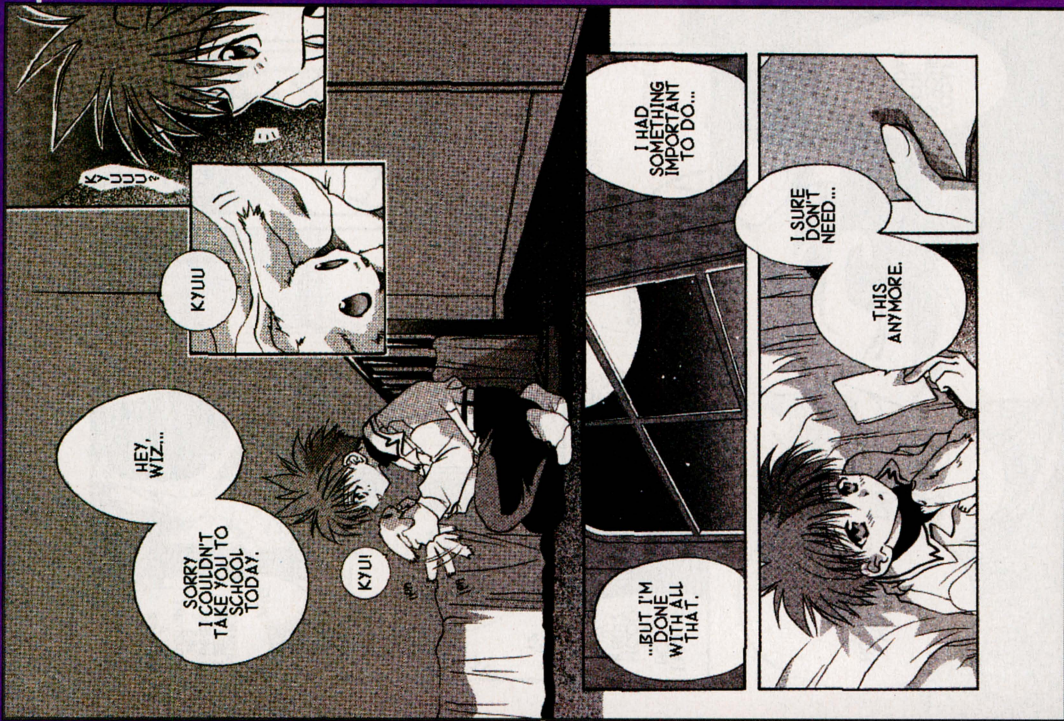
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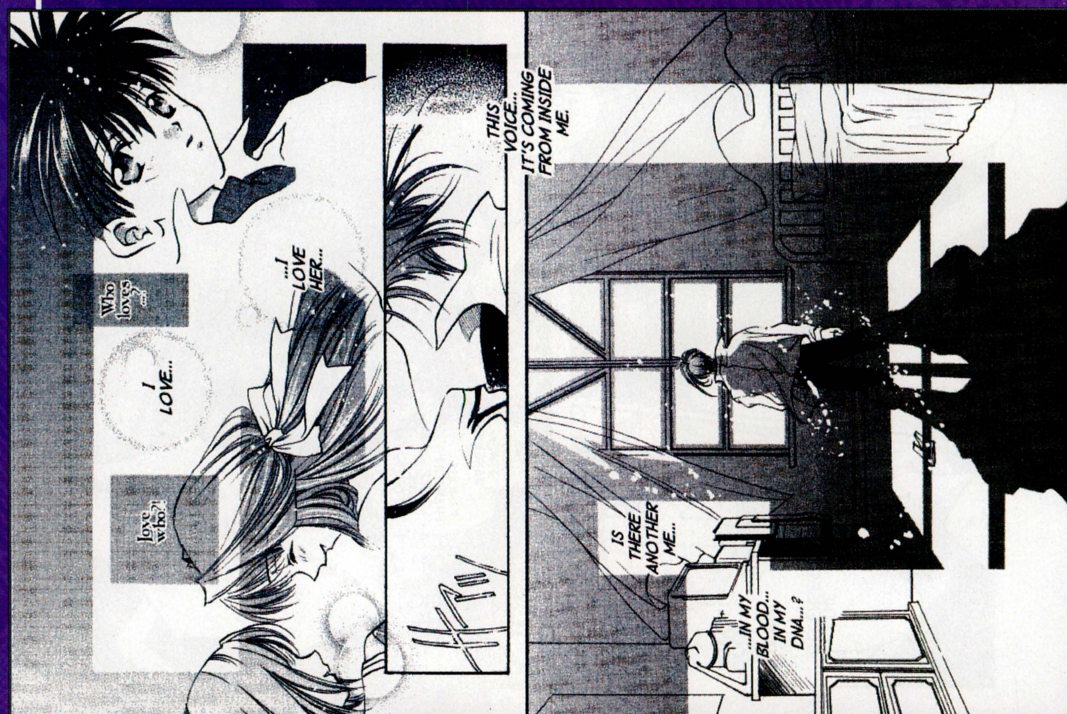
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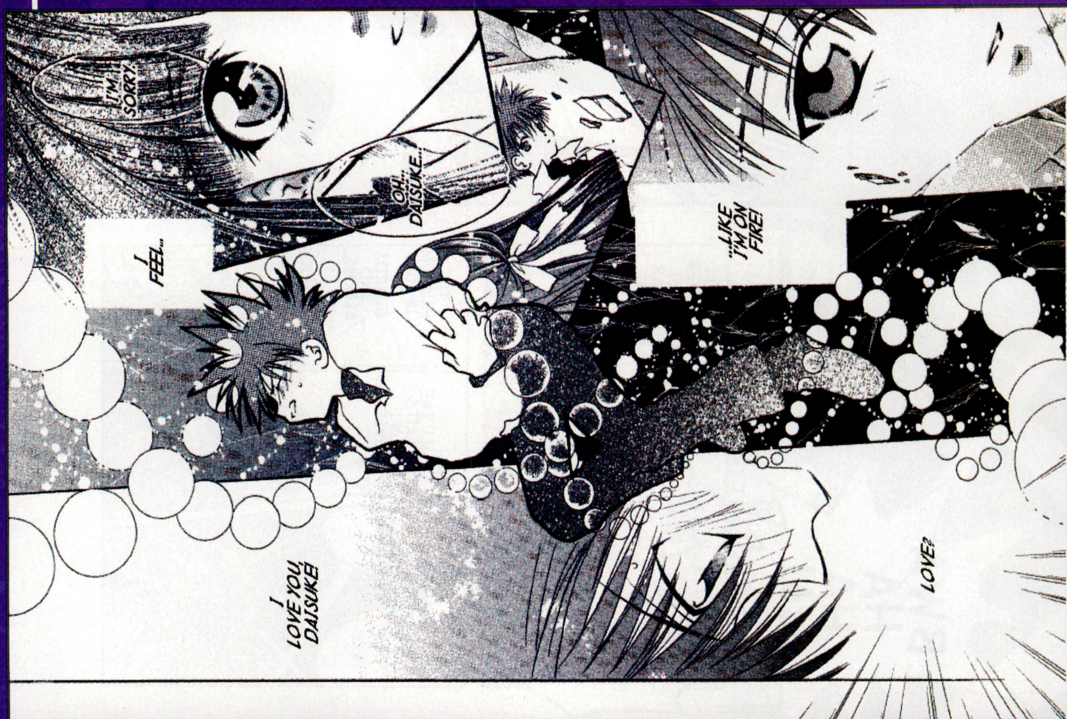


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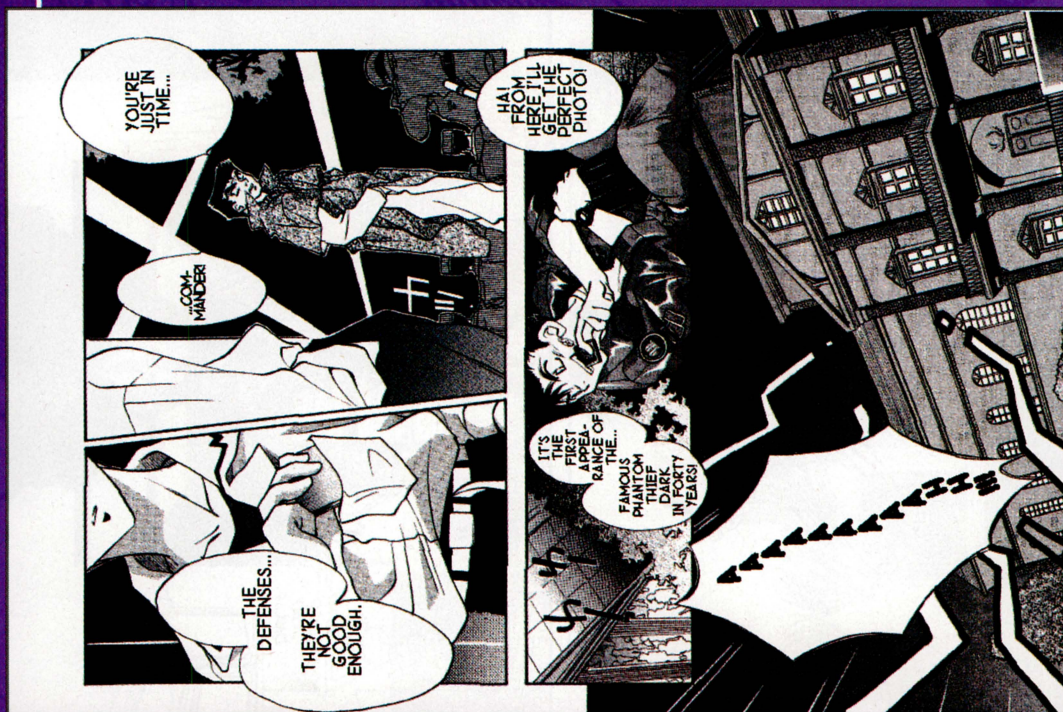


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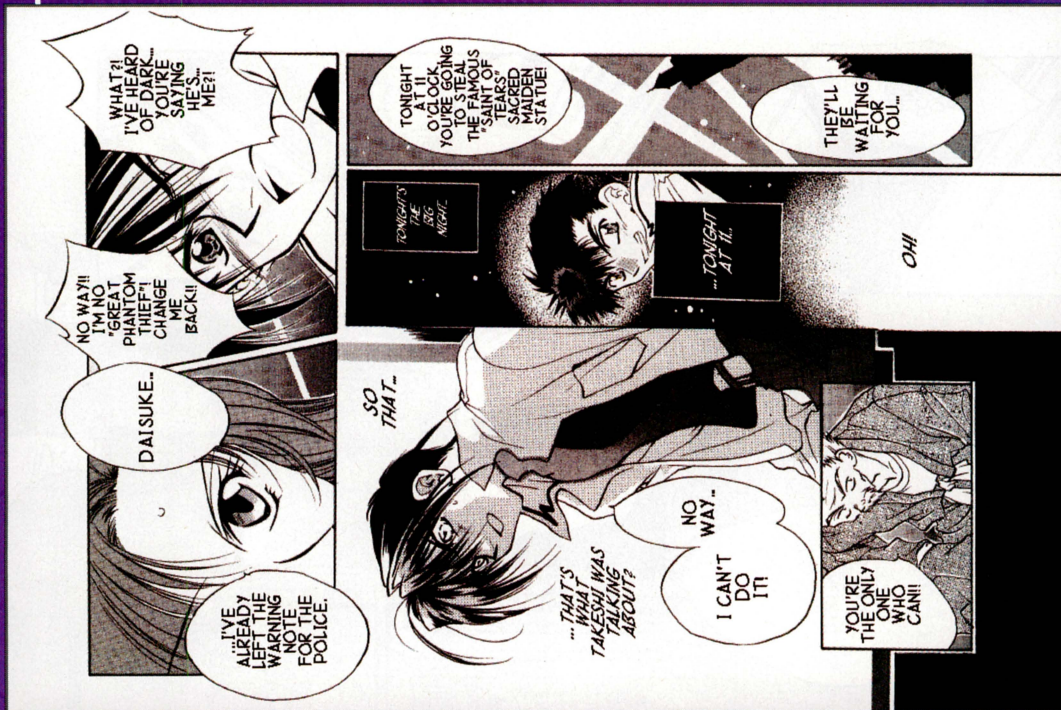
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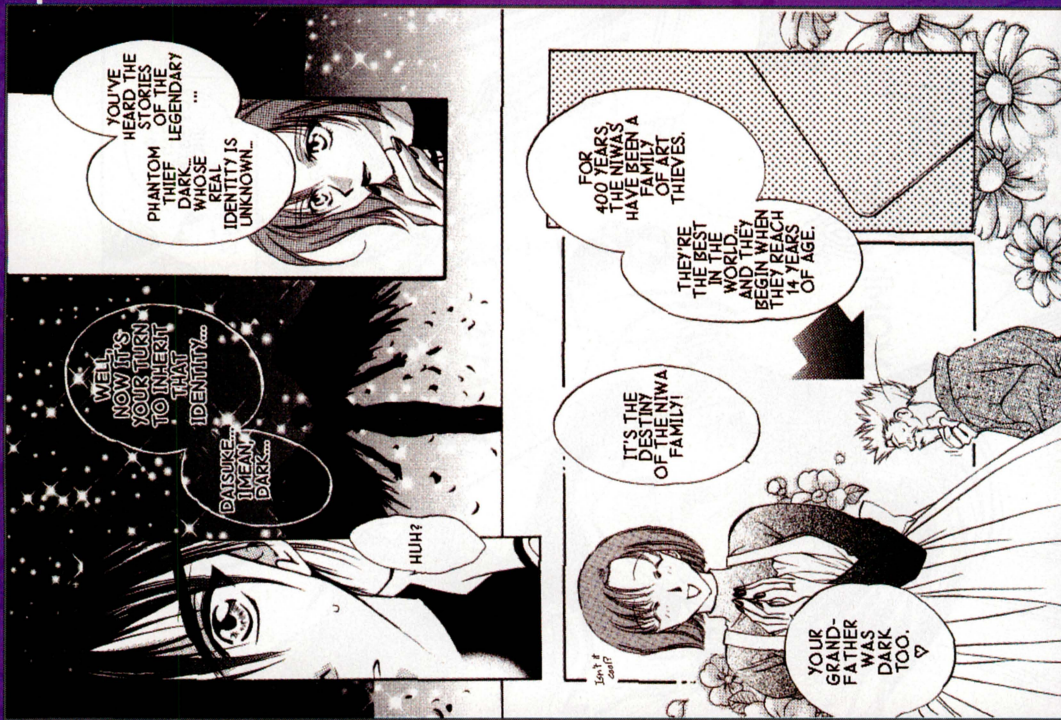


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Will he do it? Pick up **D-N-ANGEL** Vol. 1 on April 6th and find out!



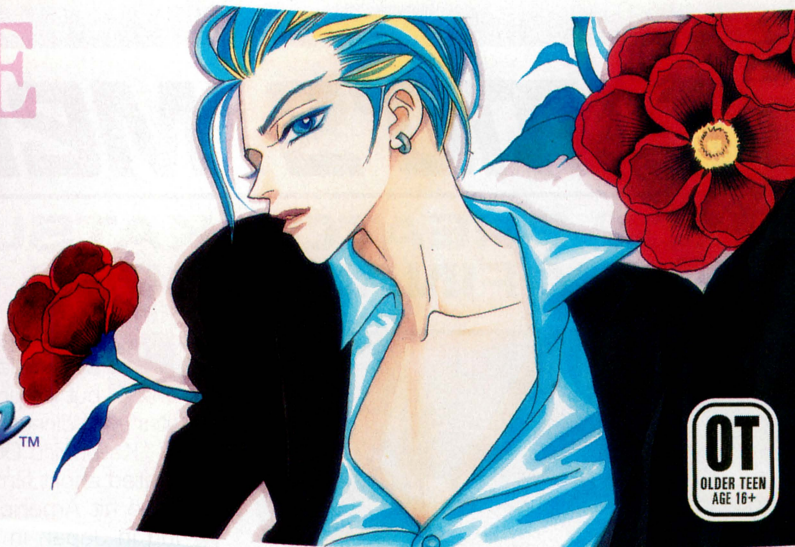
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SHOJO POWER!

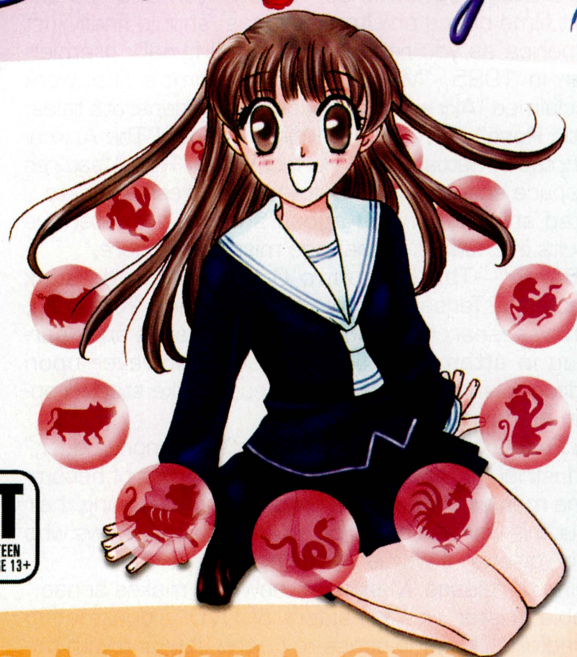
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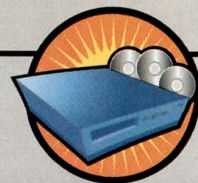
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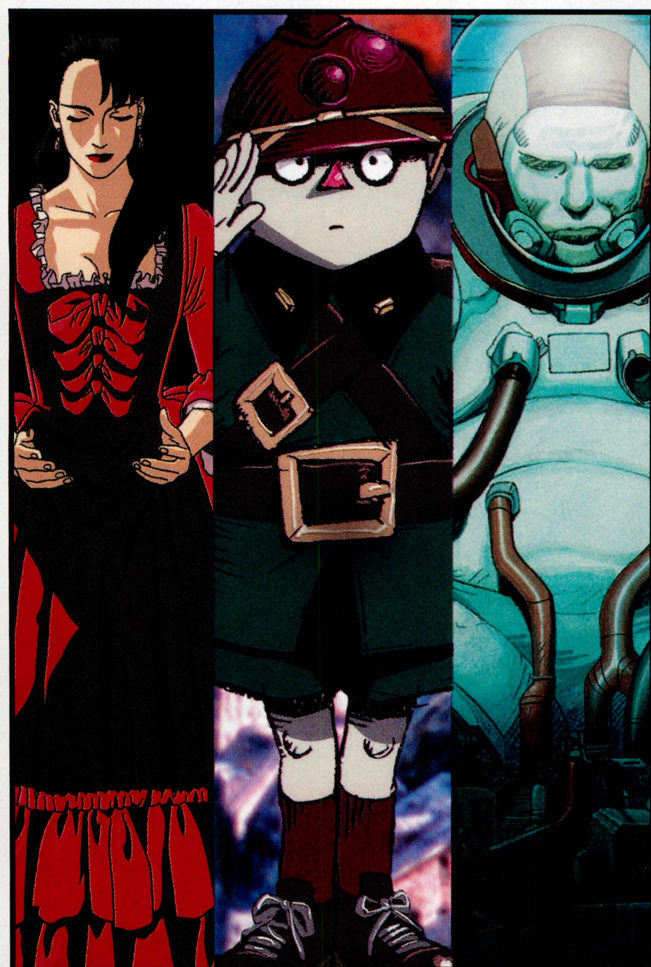
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OTOMO'S 'MEMORIES'

'AKIRA' CREATOR KATSUHIRO OTOMO TRILOGY FINALLY SEES DIGITAL DAY



THREE'S COMPANY What does this woman, this midget and this astronaut have in common? They all spring from Katsuhiro Otomo's noggin!

Ever visit a haunted space ship or meet a guy with a literally killer body odor? You can't in "The Twilight Zone," but it's pretty easy in the head of Katsuhiro Otomo, creator and director of "Akira."

"Katsuhiro Otomo's Memories," a collection of three animated short films based on Otomo's ideas, should finally just have hit America as you read this story. Originally premiering in Japan in 1995, "Memories" was Otomo's first work after his acclaimed "Akira," and includes three separate tales:

"Magnetic Rose"—Directed by Koji Morimoto ("The Animatrix") and scripted by Satoshi Kon ("Perfect Blue"), "Rose" features a group of space scavengers who follow a distress signal to a long-deserted ship. When the appearance of a mysterious woman results in death, it's a salvage mission no more.

"Stink Bomb"—The Katsuhiro Otomo-scripted "Stink Bomb," directed by Tensai Okamoto ("Wolf's Rain," "Kikaider"), stars a clumsy researcher who accidentally takes an experimental drug in attempt to fight his cold. However upon taking the drug, plants, animals, and people alike start dropping dead in his presence.

"Cannon Fodder"—Otomo himself directs "Cannon Fodder," set in an industrial militant city where a boy dreams of becoming one of the men who fire off the colossal cannons lining their city walls. But this war has raged on so long, no one knows who the enemy is, or even if war is still being waged!

"The timing to release 'Memories' now just makes sense," said Columbia Tristar vice president of DVD programming Michael Stradford. "It made sense to tie the new end with the old, to look at where these directors were and look where they are now," especially with Columbia Tristar's upcoming releases of Kon's "Tokyo Godfathers" and Otomo's "Steamboy" later this year, Stradford noted.

The "Memories" DVD Columbia Tristar released on February 24 features an anamorphic widescreen transfer, a new Dolby Digital 5.1 soundtrack, and a 30-minute "making-of" documentary. ■ **Mark Fujita**

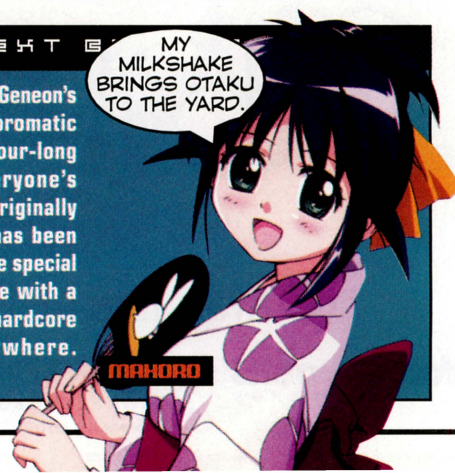
FAST FORWARD

QUICK PEERS AT THE NEXT

PLANTING THE SEED The makers of "Gundam SEED," the most popular Gundam series ever produced in Japan, have made a little something extra for its Japanese fans. The Japanese DVD release of volume 13 features an extra DVD-only 5-minute special, including all-new animation. No word yet on whether this will see release in America.

PHANTASIA 2004 A brand new, four-part OVA series based on the incredibly popular Namco RPG series *Tales of Phantasia* is due out on Japanese DVD in 2004. While not a direct sequel to the TV series "Tales of Eternia," the storylines are said to be somewhat similar and take place in the same universe.

MAHORO STATIC Geneon's hotly anticipated "Mahoromatic Summer Special," an hour-long episode featuring everyone's favorite combat maid originally scheduled for March, has been delayed until May 18. The special limited edition will come with a box and a figurine for hardcore Gainax fans everywhere. ■ **Zac Bertschy**



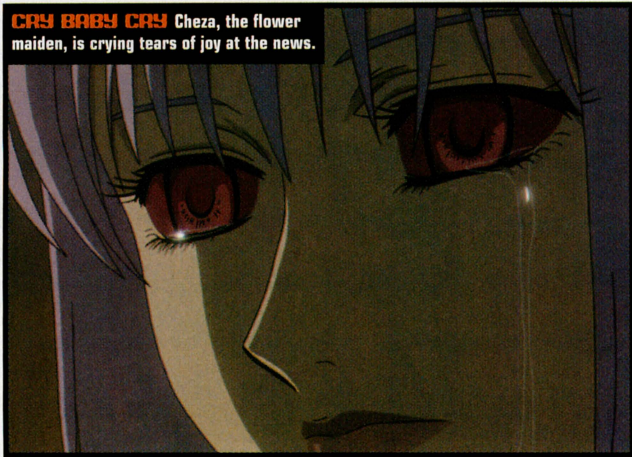
PARADISE FOUND

STUDIO BONES UNLEASHES MORE FOR 'WOLF'S RAIN'

Many Japanese fans of the 26-episode "Wolf's Rain" series were disappointed by its ending—or lack of one. But the inconclusively concluded anime, created by Studio BONES and designed by Toshihiro Kawamoto (both behind "Cowboy Bebop"), might finally get an ending.

BONES has recently announced that they'll be making four new episodes for the hit show. Better still, Bandai

CRY BABY CRY Cheza, the flower maiden, is crying tears of joy at the news.



America, who plans to bring out "Wolf's Rain" on DVD beginning this July, will be bringing the new episodes out as well.

Premiering in 2002 to rave reviews, "Wolf's Rain" is set in a post-apocalyptic future where only the few remaining wolves are said to be able to reach "Paradise." But in the middle of its run, a record-breaking four "recap" episodes were shown—using all previously used animation, and retelling the previous episodes—reportedly due to the SARS outbreak in Asia.

The final episode featured a whole lot of loose ends. Paradise-bound wolf Kiba and his pack of intrepid wolves wind up trapped inside the palace of the vicious Darcia, who has kidnapped the moon flower Cheza, the only guide to Paradise. Does Kiba find Paradise? Does the eternally weak Cheza find her strength and lead them there? Darcia's plan has been foiled, but he escapes Kiba's grasp—does he return?

Thankfully, Bandai and BONES have reformed the pack and will be concluding the story of "Wolf's Rain" in episodes 27-30. While the story details remain unknown—as well as how much of the plot might actually wrap up—for "Wolf's Rain" fans, the new episodes could be paradise. ■ ZB



DOG GONE IT Meanwhile, wolves Tsube (left) and Kiba have gone rabid with glee.

EASTERN EGGS

HIDDEN SECRETS OF YOUR FAVORITE DVDS



GTO VOL. 9

There are two hidden interviews here. Go to the Extras menu and press Enter. Highlight the green pushpin with your remote and press Enter again to see an interview with Azusa Fuyutsuki voice actress Wendee Lee. Doing the same thing on the red pushpin will reveal an interview with series creator Tohru Fujisawa!

MASTER KEATON VOL. 1

If you go to the Extras menu, then highlight the DVD credits option, then press left, then down three times, and then enter, you can see a short but fun photo essay from one of the recording sessions for the "Master Keaton" English dub recorded in Vancouver, B.C. at Ocean Studios!



PATLABOR MOVIE 2

Select Audio Setup, and press Enter. Highlight the Japanese Stereo sound option, and then press left on your remote control. You'll see an area of the menu highlighted that wasn't selectable before. Pressing Enter again will show you one of the Japanese trailers for the film!

RUROUNI KENSHIN VOL. 22

Select Liner Notes from the Extras menu, and select the page regarding Shiki. If you press the left arrow and hit enter, you'll see an advertisement for the upcoming box set releases as well as a special announcement about the "Kenshin" Character Specials.



YOU'RE UNDER ARREST VOL. 3

Highlight the trash can on the right of the menu screen. If you press enter, you'll be shown a keypad. Enter the numbers 2, 5, 1, 1, 8, 5 and 0 and you'll be treated to a special blooper reel featuring outtakes from the English dub! ■ ZB

ON THE SHELF

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR ANIME STORES THIS SPRING?

MARCH ARCADE GAMER FUBUKI

Fubuki's one goal in life is to be the best arcade gamer ever. When an evil organization steals her amazing game-playing powers, she has to battle every crazy video game villain in the book to get them back! (CPM, \$29.98)

AURA BATTLER DUNBINE VOL. 6

The labyrinthine tale of Byston Well marks its halfway point in "Gundam" creator Tomino Yoshiyuki's war-rattled tale of love, betrayal and heroism. The tireless crew of the Zelerna continue their crusade against the treacherous Drake Luft. (ADV, \$29.98)

BIG O II VOL. 2

Just when Roger Smith's life couldn't get any more hectic, a rampaging Megadeus robot rips through Paradigm City. Relying on his friend Angel and his cohort Dorothy, Roger takes down the bad guys, but it's starting to have a dizzying effect on his psyche. (Bandai, \$24.98)

BIRDY THE MIGHTY: DOUBLE TROUBLE

From the director of "Ninja Scroll" and the "X" TV series comes the story of Birdy, an intergalactic policewoman who accidentally murders

high school student Tsutomu! Birdy is forced to become one with Tsutomu's body in order to save his life. (CPM, \$19.98)

BOYS OVER FLOWERS VOL. 4

Ever since a fateful date in the snow, the entire school thinks Tsukasa and Tsukushi are a couple, and now Tsukushi has the F4's underlings kissing her feet. When Tsukushi meets Thomas, a doppelganger for Rui, things get much more complicated. (Viz, \$24.98)

BRIGADOON VOL. 6

The "Brigadoon" story concludes! Marin and Melan fight back an enemy unlike anything they've ever faced before, and are confronted with a terrifying decision that may decide the fate of the world. (TOKYOPOP, \$29.98)

CHOBITS VOL. 7

This special recap disc features a series of episodes recalling the most memorable



MEGADEUS EX MACHINA Has the Big O let his award of Best Robot go to his tiny head? Watch and find out!

moments in the "Chobits" television series, retold through the eyes of different characters. Also included is the hilarious short "Chibits" featuring Sumomo and Kotoko! (Geneon, \$19.98)

CYBER CITY: TIME BOMB

A team of convicts are outfitted with explosive collars and given a dangerous mission: to stop an evil genius who's taken control of a business tower with 50,000 innocent civilians inside! (CPM, \$29.98)

DRAGON BALL Z VOL. 61

The Cell games draw ever closer, but a relaxed Goku is shaken when a team of misled military troops sends a squadron of fighters with ordinary weapons against the all-powerful Cell! (FUNimation, \$19.95)

DRAGON BALL: FORTUNETELLER BABA SAGA

While Goku is still struggling to find the last Dragon Ball, Emperor Pilaf has his own schemes. Master Roshi tells Goku of a fortuneteller named Baba who's an expert at finding lost things, and she'll help him...but for a price! (FUNimation, \$39.98)

DRAGONBALL GT VOL. 13 & 14

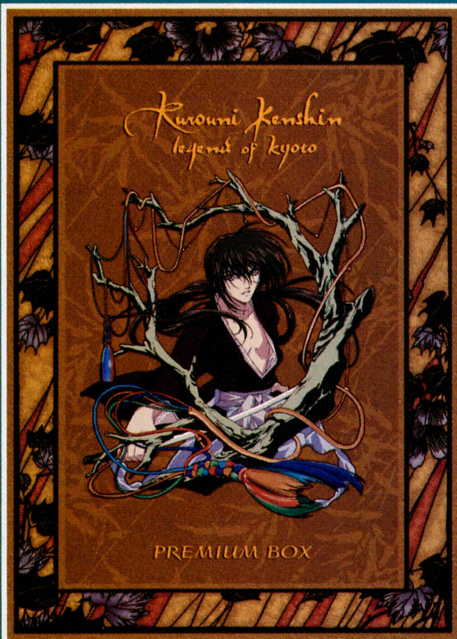
Goku's tumultuous tryst with the four-star fire dragon Nuova continues. Having spared Pan's life, Nuova has shown himself to be a dragon of a different color. Will Goku regain the lost Dragon Ball or let Nuova roam free? (FUNimation, \$24.98 each)

HOT PICK

RURONI KENSHIN PREMIUM BOX SET 2

March 30 from Media Blasters
\$149.95

TV series often hit their stride right in the middle, and "Rurouni Kenshin" is one of them. But few series' strides can be called masterpieces—and yet "Kenshin" succeeds here too. "The Kyoto Arc," spanning episodes 28-62, sees ex-manslayer Kenshin, along with punch-packin' pal Sanosuke and cool-as-ice swordsman Saito, venture forth to take down Shishio, a fanatical anti-government basket case intent on burning the newly-formed Meiji government to the ground. The action is intense as Kenshin and company face off against a cadre of some of the craziest henchmen ever seen in anime, including a guy with self-made bird wings armed with dynamite and a blind man wielding a spear who wears a giant turtle shell. Some of the show's most beloved characters are introduced here, including Sojirou, a deadly child with an eternal smile who breaks Kenshin's sakaba sword! It's all collected here for the first time in a handsome and convenient box set, making one of the finest moments in anime history available all at once for a handy price. Media Blasters is also producing an empty art box available for fans who already bought the individual discs, so nobody's left complaining. ■ ZB



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FIGURE 17 VOL. 4

Tsubasa and Hikaru, when joined together, form a fearsome alien-fighting machine called Figure 17, but they're about to meet their match. It's a battle of brawn and brains as Figure 17 takes on its toughest foe ever! (Media Blasters, \$29.95)

FINAL FANTASY UNLIMITED VOL. 4

Our intrepid heroes continue their adventure across Wonderland in search of the pieces of the mighty Omega. They're in a race against the evil Earl Tyrant, who's determined to collect all the Omega pieces, whatever the cost! (ADV, \$24.98)

GUN FRONTIER: GUN PACK

Thrill to this unique Old West take on Leiji Matsumoto's exciting and beloved Herlock saga, complete with cowboy hats, spurs, and duels at high noon. (Media Blasters, \$39.98)

GUNPARADE MARCH VOL. 2

Atsushi Hayami and the fighting class of Unit 5121 continue their endless crusade against the terrifying alien invaders that plague the land following the Pacific war of 1945. It's an alternate history you never imagined! (Media Blasters, \$29.98)

HACK SIGN VOL. 6

The World is ending! The final volume of ".hack://SIGN" is here; will Tsukasa finally discover the true secrets behind The World and his mysterious powers? (Bandai, \$29.98)

HOT PICK

GALAXY ANGEL VOL. 1

March 16 from Bandai Entertainment \$29.98

Animation house Broccoli knows "cute" and they know "wacky," having created the astoundingly cute and wacky "Di Gi Charat." Their latest series "Galaxy Angel," having overrun Japan with mountains of adorable merchandise, will finally land here. "Galaxy Angel" is a madcap science fiction adventure heavily sprinkled with liberal amounts of cuteness; the story follows one Milfeulle Sakuraba, a brand-new member of the elite Angel Brigade, which is a little-known office of the Transvall Empire's military dedicated to seeking out powerful, lost technology. Unfortunately, nobody seems to know what exactly this lost technology is, so they spend their time performing slightly unorthodox missions. Everything from rescuing kittens to stalling ballistic missiles is on the plate for Milfeulle and her crew of ridiculously cute and somewhat inept Angel Brigade officers. Filling out the brigade are Mint Blancmanche, a junk food addict, Forte Stollen, a weapons expert, Vanilla H (whose specialty isn't what the name suggests!) and second lieutenant Ranpha Franboise. Together, they'll see any mission, no matter how dangerous—or ludicrous—to completion, even if it kills them or gives their commander a heart attack! **28**



HAPPY LESSON VOL. 2

Chitose's house is filled with mothers, and all of them have problems. Minzauki has trouble deciding on an after-school club, Uzuki swoons over a total stranger, and the Annual Field Day is right around the corner! (ADV, \$29.98)

HEAT GUY J VOL. 5

Judoh's murderous criminal syndicates are sent into violent madness when the Vampire of the Leonelli clan, Clair, falls from power. Daisuke leaps into action to find the fallen Vampire, but is besieged by a city in chaos. (Geneon, \$29.98)

INITIAL D VOL. 4

Iggy finally gets a car—and his first challenge! Meanwhile, Tak's got his hands full with the end of his battle with Zack and meeting with a dangerous new racer. (TOKYOPOP, \$19.98)

IRIA: ZEIRAM THE ANIMATION COLLECTION

One of anime's most beloved OVA series, this complete collection includes every episode of the groundbreaking, heart-stopping Iria saga. (Media Blasters, \$39.98)



THE LAST VAMPIRE After the nefarious Claire (top left) falls from power, can Daisuke find him before it's too late?

KIDDY GRADE VOL. 2

Lumière, Éclair and the rest of the team at the Galactic Organization of Trade and Tariffs continue to take down space pirates and treaty violators at every turn, but is something afoot in the bureaucracy of GOTT? Lumière's worst enemy could be her own boss! (FUNimation, \$24.98)

KIKAIDER 01

A one-shot OVA that follows the TV series. After the DARK organization's destruction, Jiro wanders aimlessly until he comes across a woman protecting a boy from the evil Professor Gill. Joining forces with Kikaider 00 and Bijinder, can Jiro bring the madman to his knees? (Bandai, \$24.98)

KNIGHTS OF THE ZODIAC VOL. 2

The edited-for-television version of "Saint Seiya" from DiC and ADV. Andromeda's deadly Nebula Chains are broken by his estranged brother, Ikki, who now appears as the all-powerful warrior Phoenix. (ADV, \$14.98)

LEGEND OF THE MYSTICAL NINJA VOL. 3

Dr. Mudanashi, the inventor of the Cyber Tunnel, faces off against plucky young ninja Goemon and his intrepid team of crime-fighting friends! Will they ever be able to stop the villainous Makuamuuge? (ADV, \$19.98)

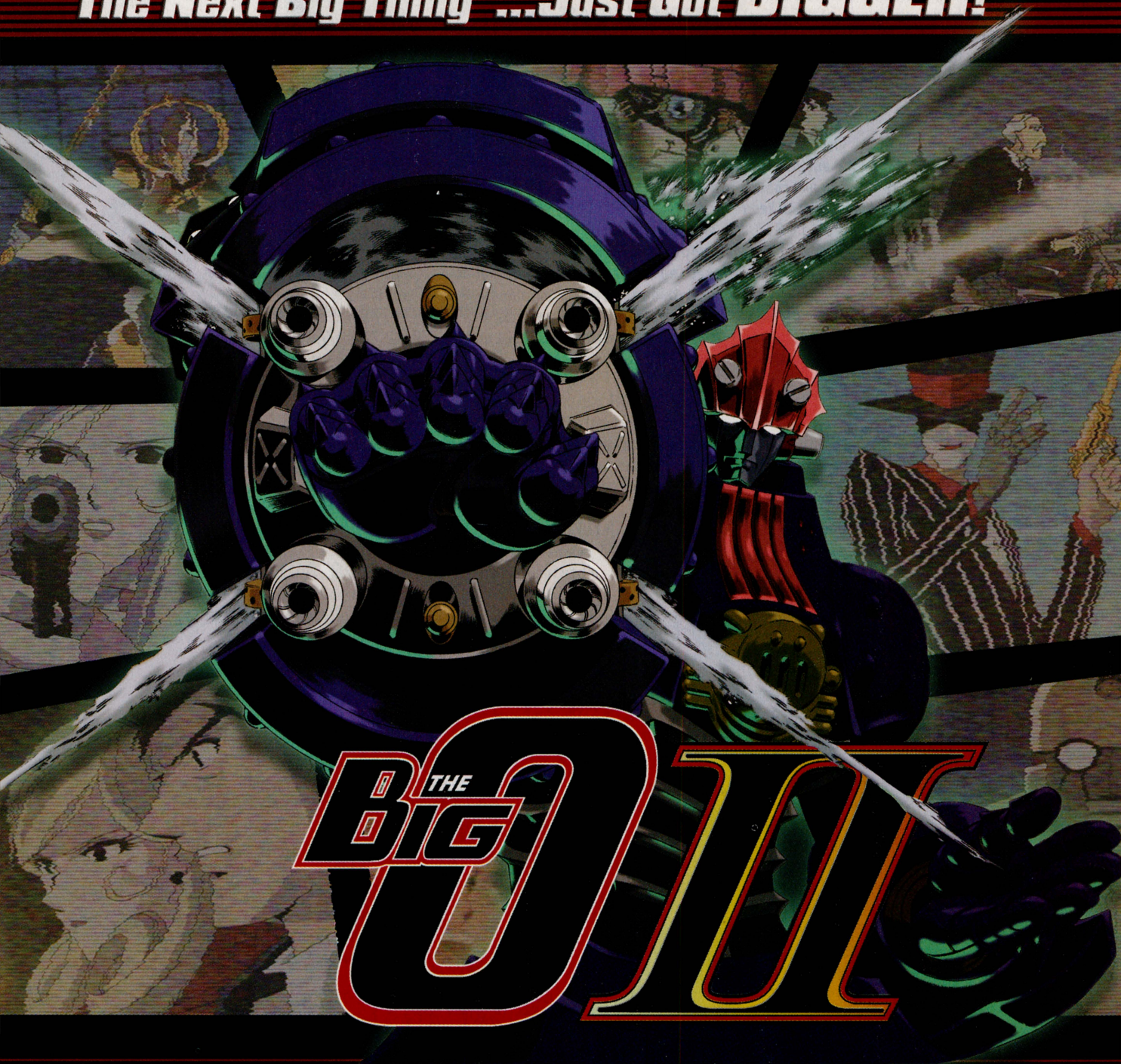
L/R VOL. 3

Rowe's attempt to relax and enjoy Ishtar's first baseball game is thwarted when he's stuck between a group of ceaselessly arguing airplane passengers and an old man who's in the middle of a seizure! (Geneon, \$29.98)

MAGICAL SHOPPING ARCADE ABENOBASHI VOL. 3

Arumi and Sasshi's journey through alternate

A City of Lost Memories
A Man in Search of His Past
The Next Big Thing ...Just Got **BIGGER!**



Paradigm City is a city of the past...a city of lost memories. The city is besieged daily by criminals threatening to tear the city apart using huge fighting machines known as a Megadeus. Roger Smith is in search of his past and he has sworn to protect the metropolis from all villainy with the help of one very BIG friend. But as the truths of the past begins to be revealed...he may not like what finds for it is the past that may spell the destruction of everyone living in Paradigm City. Prepare yourself for Season 2 of The Big O. Its time to remember.

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Abenobashis continues with a world powered by magic, girlfriends who don't know when to quit, and a world consumed with sugary sweetness! (ADV, \$29.98)

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION DIRECTOR'S CUT VOL. 2

"Evangelion" fans, look no further; this collection features the director's cuts of the series' shocking final moments, comprising episodes 24-26 in one two-disc set, loaded with special features. (ADV, \$29.98)

NUKU NUKU TV VOL. 1

Everyone's favorite robotic cat girl Nuku Nuku winds up in high school, and it's anything but normal! She's got to fight back the evil robots controlled by Hell Mishima if she wants to keep her family and newfound friends safe. (ADV, \$29.98)

ONCE UPON A TIME

Originally released as "Windaria" by Streamline Pictures, when the Prince of Lunaria has cut the water supply to the Shadowlands, war between the two nations is declared, tearing him from his beloved. (ADV, \$14.98)

ORPHEN II VOL. 3

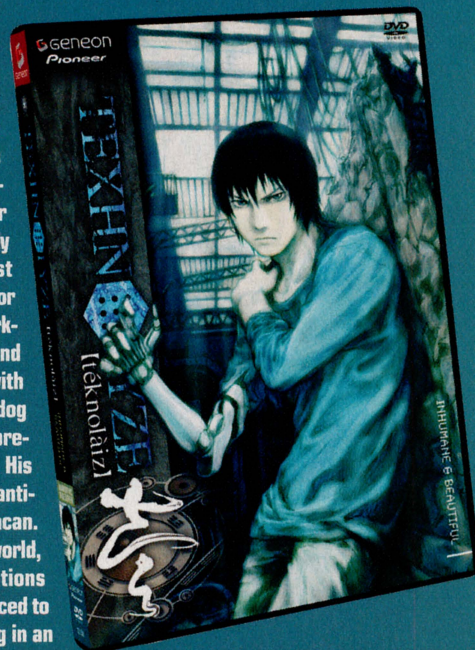
Orphen continues his quest across the countryside. A new crop of strange and crazy villains crosses his path, determined to do what it takes to bring his journey to an end! (ADV, \$29.98)

HOT PICK

TECHNOLYZE VOL. 1

April 6 from Geneon Entertainment, \$29.98

From the artful, twisted and brilliant mind of anime auteur yoshitoshi ABe comes "Technolyze," the latest in a long string of smash anime hits known for their unique storylines and utterly unbelievable characters. "Technolyze" has swiftly earned a reputation for being intellectually labyrinthine and extremely complex. The first 15 minutes of the first episode have no dialogue; ABe's pen speaks for itself, so get ready to give your brain a workout! The story takes place in a underground dystopia called LUKUSS, a city swarming with organized crime. Onishi, the leader of top-dog crime syndicate the Organo, struggles to prevent the city from bursting into gang war. His rivals are the Salvation Union, a fanatical anti-gang army, and the small but powerful Racan. Yoshii, a mysterious man from the surface world, makes his presence known but his intentions unclear. Enter Ichise, a young man who's forced to box for money. Having lost an arm and a leg in an unfortunate incident with his boxing promoter, he now has new artificial "Technolyzed" limbs that he has to get used to quickly. How will these lives intertwine? Can Ichise handle his arm which seems to be working both for and against him? It's a maze of deception, intrigue and angst as only yoshitoshi ABe can tell it! ■ **ZB**



PRETEAR VOL. 4

The Pretear and her gang of effective and hunky Leaf Knights face a terrifying enemy and fight for peace against Fenril, the Princess of Destruction one final, brutal time. (ADV, \$29.98)

ROBOTECH REMASTERED EXTENDED EDITION VOL. 2

The second set of restored and re-edited "Robotech" episodes includes episodes 13-26 of the Macross saga, complete with new, previously-unseen footage, remastered audio and sparkling new visuals. (ADV, \$29.98)

SAIYUKI VOL. 9

Dokugakuji and Gojyo are trapped in a cave, and start unearthing the secrets of one another's past, revealing the foundations of what make Gojyo and his companions so strong. (ADV, \$29.98)

S-CRY-ED VOL. 5

Kanami is kidnapped following a devastating pincher attack executed by Kigetsuki and the Tokonatsu sisters! Ryuoh vows to track her down and bring her kidnappers to justice. (Bandai, \$29.98)

SLAYERS EXCELLENT

The second OVA series featuring Lina the Dragon-Slayer and her inept cohort Naga the



HERDING OUT The newest volume of 's-CRY-ed' doesn't have Ryuoh's head becoming the size of scheris. Just FYI.

White Serpent is collected on one DVD. See how Lina and Naga met for the first time! (ADV, \$24.98)

SOMEDAY'S DREAMERS VOL. 3

Disturbed by her own special powers, Yume doesn't feel ready to take the mage certification exam and end her apprenticeship. Manipulated by the powers that be, Yume must overcome her loss of faith. (Geneon, \$29.98)

SUPER GALS VOL. 5

Ran and Mami aren't exactly enemies anymore...and they're still not exactly friends either! Still a GAL's gotta do what a gal's gotta do. (ADV, \$29.98)

TENCHI MUYO! GXP VOL. 1

When a spaceship nearly ends unlucky high school student Seina's life, he's given the opportunity of a lifetime: to enlist in the Galaxy Police Academy and become an intergalactic peace-keeper! (FUNimation, \$24.98)

TWELVE KINGDOMS VOL. 5

Youko's strange and perilous journey through the land of the twelve kingdoms continues. She's overcome the treacherous Sugimoto, but a whole world of new dangers awaits her every footstep. (Media Blasters, \$29.98)

YU YU HAKUSHO VOL. 22

Someone has opened a tunnel between the living world and the demon world, and it's up to Yusuke, along with a mortal named Murota who holds the key to sealing the tunnel, to stop his evil plan. (FUNimation, \$24.98)

APRIL BEYBLADE VOL. 6

The Bladebreakers are treated to a ride to the Knight's castle by the Italian and French Beyblade champs, Oliver and Enrique. Little do they

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know that the knight is the very same one who beat Tyson! (Geneon, \$19.98)

CAPTAIN HERLOCK VOL. 2

Herlock's ship Arcadia is no match for the mind-bending power of the evil battleship Noo, which has turned the entirety of the Space Sheriff fleet against itself! Only Herlock stands between the Noo and total galactic domination. (Geneon, \$29.98)

INUYASHA VOL. 16 & 17

Inuyasha and Koga have a deadly showdown with dual incarnations of Naraku, Juromaru and Kageromaru. It's up to Koga and Inu-Yasha to put aside their differences to take down a common foe, before they both wind up dead! (Viz, \$24.98)

LAST EXILE VOL. 3

An eight-hour Vanship race tests Claus and Lavi's limits. They're joined by the mysterious Dio Eraclea, a pilot who tries to make fast friends with Claus. Meanwhile, the enigmatic Exile Door is up for auction! (Geneon, \$29.98)

MAISON IKKOKU BOX SET 3

Episodes 25-36 of Rumiko Takahashi's wildly popular madcap romantic comedy! Aimless ronin student Godai and impossibly perfect Coach Mitaka vie for the affections of the comely and demure Kyoko. A misunderstanding leads to Godai's decision to move out of Ikkoku once and for all! (Viz, \$49.98)

HOT PICK

WEDDING PEACH

March 9 from ADV Films, \$29.98

It's back to old-school anime basics as a team of preening girls armed with magic wands and short skirts battle all-powerful demonic beasts! In the tradition of "Sailor Moon" and progenitor to "Card Captor Sakura" comes "Wedding Peach," the latest in a long line of shows about swooning, boy-crazy high school girls who magically transform into butt-kicking superheroines at night. "Wedding Peach" involves a young girl named Momoko Hanasaki, a high school girl who's totally obsessed with the captain of the school's soccer team. Her best friends, Yuri and Hinagiku, follow her everywhere. When Momoko is touched by the divine light of Aphrodite, the ancient Greek god of love and beauty, she transforms into Wedding Peach (like folks usually do when they touch Aphrodite), an angel of justice and truth who spends her free time brawling with bloodthirsty demons. Momoko's selfless devotion to her friends in turn blesses them, gifting them with amazing powers and become Angel Lily and Angel Daisy, respectively. Together, they form one lean, mean, demon-destroying machine, keeping the world safe for the forces of love. Nobody can stop Wedding Peach...except for one dreamy soccer team captain, that is. ■ ZB

MASTER KEATON VOL. 6

Master Keaton, archaeologist and adventurer, rescues a German Olympian from the hands of certain death and dismemberment, then he thwarts a KGB attack during a British air show! (Geneon, \$29.98)

MAO-CHAN VOL. 4

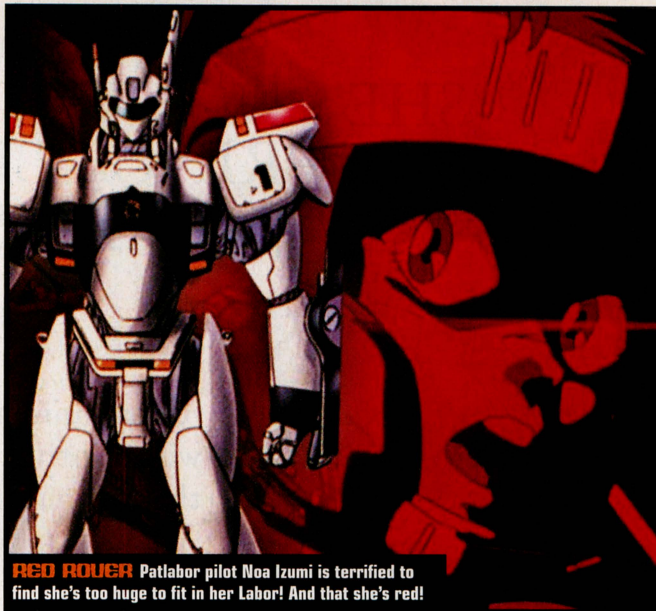
It's crisis time for Mao-chan and her friends when Mao loses her Clover badge and can't transform! It's up to Sylvia and Misora to save the day against the cute alien invaders. (Geneon, \$29.98)

MARMALADE BOY COLLECTION VOL. 1

The heart-wrenching tale of semi-forbidden love between Yuu and Miki has thrilled anime fans since the '90s and now, for the first time ever, the first 12 episodes are available in America! (TOKYOPOP, \$99.98)

PATLABOR TV COLLECTION VOL. 2

This collected edition of the second half of the "Mobile Police Patlabor" TV series contains episodes 21-40. The SV2 is introduced to the



Griffin, a new low-cost version of the Ingram unit; unfortunately, it isn't quite up to the standards they're used to. (CPM, \$89.98)

SAIKANO VOL. 1

Shuji and Chise have a problem. Their blossoming love is cut short when Chise is taken by the government and turned into a weapon of war. Will their love survive the chaos and violence of the battlefield? (Viz, \$29.98)

TENCHI MUYO! GXP VOL. 2

Poor Seina is getting stomped at Galaxy Police training, since everyone is in better shape than him. But which solution is less terrifying—undergoing "body enhancement" surgery or Amane's "special training"? (FUNimation, \$24.98)

ULTRAMAN TIGA VOL. 3

Ultraman takes on Obiko, an alien from an eradicated planet who comes to Earth in search of a new home. Unfortunately, Obiko's intentions are anything but innocent as his soup pot begins attacking the populace. (FUNimation, \$34.98)

WORLD OF NARUE BOX SET

Kazuto takes a liking to Narue, an eccentric girl at his school who claims to be an alien. Of course, when it turns out that she actually is an alien, Kazuto's life is turned upside down. (CPM, \$79.98)

YU-GI-OH! SEASON 2 VOL. 3 & 4

The final piece of Exodia is about to come in to play during Rare Hunter's final turn, and things look very grim for Yugi. Meanwhile, Joey deals with a psychic duelist named Espa Roba. (FUNimation, \$14.98)

YU-GI-OH SEASON ONE BOX SET

Contains the entire first season of the English language version of "Yu-Gi-Oh!," the anime series that spawned an international phenomenon! Follow Yugi on his path towards collectible-card gaming glory. (FUNimation, \$119.98) ●



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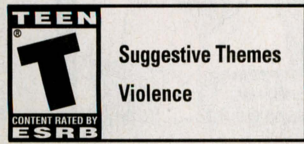
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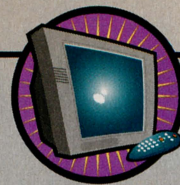
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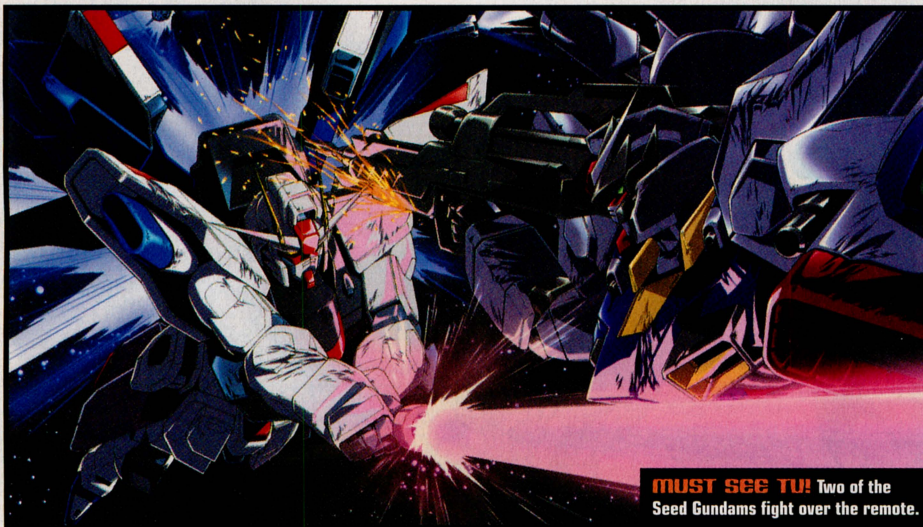
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APRIL'S COOL!

CARTOON NETWORK PREDICTS ANIME SHOWERS WITH FOUR NEW SHOWS



MUST SEE TV! Two of the Seed Gundams fight over the remote.

Screw sunshine and fresh air—this spring, stayed glued to your TV. Cartoon Network is premiering four—count 'em—four new anime series this April, including the newest Gundam series.

The 50-episode "Mobile Suit Gundam Seed" starts airing in April 2004, according to Bandai America, maker of the Gundam Seed toys. Premiering in October 2002 in Japan, "Seed" has arguably been the most popular Gundam series since the original, despite being an alternate universe series like "Gundam Wing."

"This new generation puts a fresh spin on the Gundam franchise," says Toonami creative director Sean Akins of the new show, "while retaining all of the elements that have made Gundam a household name around the world."

Akins isn't fibbing; the "Seed" plot parallels the original

"Mobile Suit Gundam" pretty closely. In Cosmic Era 71, the Earth Alliance and ZAFT are at war, and 16-year-old Kira Yamato lives on the neutral satellite Heliopolis. When ZAFT infiltrates the satellite and steals four secret Gundams, Kira gets drafted to pilot the remaining Gundam. Sound familiar?

While "Seed" seems a lock for Toonami, otaku will be staying up late for Adult Swim, which will premiere "Detective Conan," "Wolf's Rain" and "The Animatrix," the same month.

Debuting April 5, "Detective Conan" is one of the longest-running shows currently airing in Japan, with over 300 episodes so far. In it, criminals injected teen detective

Shinichi Kudo with an experimental drug, reverting him to childhood. Shinichi takes the name Conan and continues to solve crimes while looking for a cure.

The dystopian futuristic "Wolf's Rain" created by Keiko Nobumoto and Toshihiro Kawamoto ("Cowboy Bebop") begins April 24. Boasting music from Yoko Kanno ("Cowboy Bebop," "Escaflowne"), the show tells of a time when humans have devastated the earth, and wolves survive only by blending in with human society. Four wolves may have discovered a way to Paradise—but the humans want in as well.

Finally, segments from "The Animatrix," a collection of short anime stories from the world of The Matrix—and was the best selling anime DVD of 2003—premieres April 17. It's the capper on a virtual showering of anime in April; we'll update you on May flowers next issue. ■ **Caitlin Moriarity**

TUNE IN TOKYO

NANAKA 6/17

Nanaka Kirisato is a normal 17-year-old schoolgirl in her second year of high school in Tokyo...except that in anime there is no such thing as an ordinary schoolgirl. To compensate for not having magical girl powers or a giant mecha, Nanaka becomes ambitious, driven, and downright mean toward her fellow classmates. Only her childhood friend Nenji Nagahara is willing to deal with her—but only up to a point. One day, he snaps and yells at Nanaka, who runs off in tears. Unfor-

tunately (or maybe not) Nanaka falls down the stairs and loses all memory after the age of 6! Now she's a 6-year-old trapped in a 17-year-old body—and worse, she's got to pretend that nothing's wrong! Nenji, feeling somewhat responsible, helps her regain her memories but finds that he prefers the sweet, innocent 6-year-old Nanaka to her 17-year-old counterpart. To complicate things further, honor student Yuriko Amemiya, seems rather *interested* in Nanaka... ■ **CM**

CHECK OUT THE LATEST ANIME THAT'S ONLY BEEN ON THE AIR IN JAPAN



CHILD'S PLAY Nenji (left) keeps Nanaka's inner child close...too close.

AT LONG 'LAST'

GONZO'S 'LAST EXILE' SOARS ONTO PRIMETIME!

While anime has rocketed into TV stations, it's usually stayed on Saturday mornings on tucked away after midnight. But not anymore—Studio Gonzo's acclaimed "Last Exile" is coming to primetime television, on cable station TechTV.

"We're very pleased to have 'Last Exile,'" says Laura Civiello, TechTV's vice president acquisitions and commissions. "Its strong storytelling and incredible visuals will make it great watching for our broader TechTV audience. That's why we're giving it a run in primetime and airing it in a marathon block on Sunday—we want as many people as possible to enjoy it."

The studio behind anime series such as "Blue Submarine No. 6" and "Hellsing," Gonzo created "Last Exile" as their 10th Anniversary series, utilizing their trademark talent of integrating CG and traditional 2D animation. The story follows two young pilots, Claus and Lavie, who maintain a courier business with their Vanship, a small aircraft designed to run errands. Taking their first three-star job (the most difficult mission they've ever tackled), the two wind up embroiled in the middle of a massive air war between agitated superpowers, and their actions will change the course of history. The DVDs are currently being released by Geneon Entertainment.

"'Last Exile' is perfect for TechTV," said Civiello. "Science

fiction themes are played out through man-machine adventures and battles, the characters are compelling and its animation represents the leading edge of art and technology."

"Last Exile" will premiere on Monday, March 8, at 10 p.m. Eastern, and run through Friday, showing two episodes per day; on March 14, the first thirteen episodes will be shown in a marathon beginning at 4 p.m.

■ ZB & Robert Bricken



SKY KIDS Claus (left) and Lavie's happy days as sky couriers don't last long.



UNHAPPY DAYS See? Claus doesn't look happy at all in this picture, but it could be Tatanas (right) fault.

ON THE AIR

WHAT TO WATCH & WHERE

ABC FAMILY

Beyblade: Weekdays 7:30 a.m.; Saturday & Sunday 7:30 & 9 a.m.

Digimon: Weekdays 7 & 8:30 a.m.; Saturday & Sunday 7, 9:30 & 10 a.m.

Medabots: Saturday & Sunday 10:30 a.m.

CARTOON NETWORK

Toonami: Weekdays Monday-Friday, "SD Gundam Force" at 5 p.m., "Yu Yu Hakusho" at 5:30 p.m., "Dragon Ball Z" at 6 p.m. Monday-Thu. is "Dragon Ball" at 6:30, but on Fridays "Dragon Ball GT" takes over!

Adult Swim: Monday-Thursday, it's "Witch Hunter Robin" at 12 & 3 a.m., "Inuyasha" at 12:30 & 3:30 a.m., "Big O" at 1 & 4 a.m. and "Cowboy Bebop" at 1:30 & 4:30 a.m. Sundays, watch "The Big O" at 12:30 & 3:30 a.m., and "Cowboy Bebop" at 1:30 & 4:30 a.m.

Super Saturday: "Zoids" 8 p.m., "Yu-Gi-Oh!" at 10 p.m., "Cyborg 009" at 10:30 p.m. & 1:30 a.m., "Rurouni Kenshin" at 11, ".hack//SIGN" at midnight, "Knights of the Zodiac" at 12:30 a.m.

Hamtaro: Weekdays 9 a.m., Saturday 1 p.m.

Pokémon: Weekdays 7 a.m.; Monday-Thursday 9 p.m.

Yu-Gi-Oh!: Weekdays 7:30 a.m.

Zoids: Weekdays 6 a.m.

FOX BOX

Kirby: Right Back At Ya! Saturday 9 a.m.

Sonic X: Saturday 9:30 & 11:30 a.m.

Shaman King: Saturday 10 a.m.

Ultimate Muscle: Saturday 11 a.m.

INTERNATIONAL CHANNEL

Black Heaven: Monday 11 p.m.

Dragon Ball GT: Sunday 10:30 p.m.

El Hazard: Wednesday 11 p.m.

Fushigi Yugi: Tuesday 11 p.m.

Tenchi Universe: Friday & Sunday 11 p.m.



KIDS WB!

Astro Boy: Saturdays at 8:30 a.m.

Pokémon: Advanced: Weekdays 4 p.m. & Saturdays 10 a.m.

Yu-Gi-Oh! Enter the Shadow Realm: Weekdays 4:30 p.m. & Saturdays 11 a.m.

SHO NEXT

GTO: Weekdays 9 p.m.

STARZ! ACTION

March: "Perfect Blue," "Black Magic M-66," "Patlabor: The Mobile Police," and "Grappler Baki: The Ultimate Fighter."

April: "Cowboy Bebop: The Movie," "Macross II: Lovers Again," "Patlabor 2: The Movie," "Macross Plus" and "New Dominion Tank Police."

TECH TV

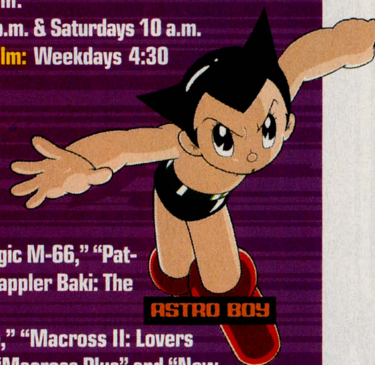
Last Exile: Monday through Friday, 10 p.m. and 10:30 starting March 8.

OTHER OPTIONS

Anime Network: <http://www.theanimenetwork.com>.

Action Movie Channel: <http://www.actionmoviechannel.com>

■ CM



ASTRO BOY

WHAT IF...?

CAN YOU IMAGINE YOUR FAVORITE AMERICAN 'TOONS TURNING JAPANESE? WE REALLY THINK SO...

art by DAVID HUTCHISON

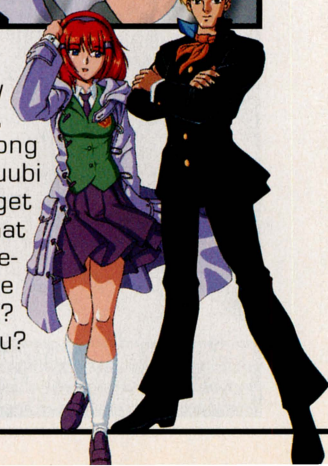
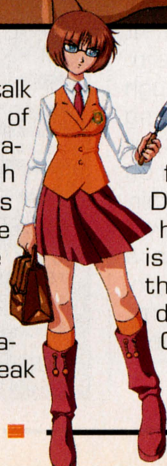


TSUKUUBI DU, WHERE ARE YOU?

Ancient demons and evil legends stalk the fog-enshrouded mountains of Japan, and only the secret organization Mystery, Inc. knows why! High school student Fureddo Takahashi's hand-held Mystery Machine device is a fount of information, able to identify ghoulies and reveal their weaknesses, but the terror of the situation is usually enough to freak

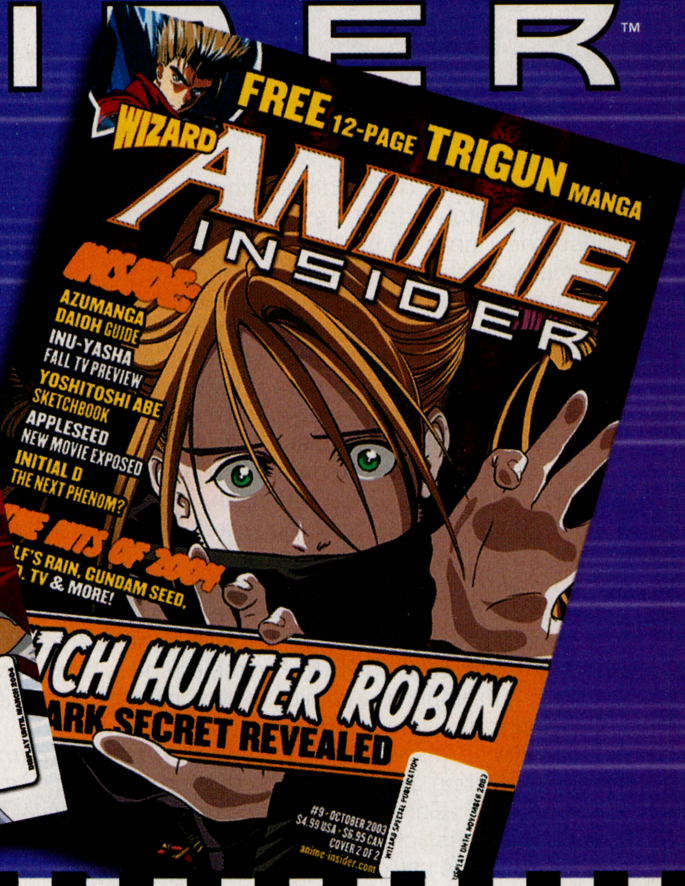
out his classmates: leggy Dafuni, bookish Beruma, stylin' Shaggi and his life-long friend and talking dog, Tsukuubi Du. But where did Fureddo get his Mystery Machine, and what is his plan? Does it have something to do with the ultimate destiny of Tsukuubi Du himself? Oh Tsukuubi Du, where are you?

■ Douglas Goldstein



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IAN13

'TRIGUN' TO THE MAX

VASH THE STAMPEDE GETS SECOND CHANCE TO TELL ENTIRE STORY

For those of you who have *Trigun* volume two and are dying to know what happens next, Dark Horse is riding to the rescue.

On the heels of the sold-out success of the first Yasuhiro Nightow *Trigun* manga, the publisher has landed the rights to publish its sequel, *Trigun Maximum*. Vash the Stampede, Meryl Strife, "Stungun" Milly and the rest of the usual suspects return, and Dark Horse promises nothing will be lost in the translation. "As readers seem to demand these days, we'll be printing exactly what is printed in the Japanese tankobon," promised Editor Tim Ervin-Gore.

As for the change in the name, Ervin-Gore noted two publishers had been involved with the production of *Trigun* in Japan, which explains why *Trigun Maximum* is considered separate from the main *Trigun* series. "When Nightow first finished the initial run of *Trigun*, his first publisher canceled it. So he moved to Young King Comics, which started *Trigun Maximum* and then republished the original *Trigun* volumes," he explained.

As for the differences between the manga and the anime, Ervin-Gore observed, "It seems to be the same story, but slightly reordered, with characters and events slightly off-kilter, allowing for the anime episodes to work better on their own. But just like any example of a comics-to-film project, the anime loses much of the detail, and strips some of the personality."

Dark Horse plans on publishing *Trigun Maximum* on a quarterly schedule starting June, although the format and price-point are undetermined. Ervin-Gore has "high hopes" for *Trigun Maximum* and joked about the biggest challenge to this job.

"I suppose one could say it's a challenge to keep myself from watching all of the anime, so I don't ruin it when I read the book. But then again, I really ought to watch the whole thing so I know what's going on, right? Oh, I can't decide," he laughed.

■ Jennifer M. Contino



QUICK READS

PAGE TURNIN' NEWS CLIPS

IRONING IT OUT Choosing to focus on the company's restructuring, Studio Ironcat recently canceled open solicitations through Diamond on over 30 titles, including Narumi Kakinouchi's *Yui Kanosho* and Yuu Asami's *A.I. Revolution*. President Steve Bennett told *Anime Insider*, "We have every intention of putting out these titles. They will be available again for new re-solicitation as we catch up with them."

FIRST 'FLESH' The first book in the Media Blasters Comics line, an anthology based in the universe created by their original horror movie "Flesh for the Beast," will be out in late July. The 280 page book will have black and white interiors and two color covers. Most importantly, though, the book will read both left-to-right and right-to-left, leading many to speculate if a Japanese manga-ka will be contributing. Stay tuned...

MECHA MANGA Mecha manga fans will be flocking to their nearest Barnes & Noble this April as Viz announced that the bookstore chain will be carrying the *RahXephon* manga as an exclusive for six months. Other titles that Viz recently confirmed include Yuu Watase's *Imadoki*, *Bleach*, *Tenshi na Konamiki*, and *Megaman NT Warrior* among others. ■ Trisha L. Sebastian



BUDDING ROMANCE Tanpopo (left) and Kouki raise flowers and their tempers in *Imadoki*.

LOOK HOMEWARD, ASAMIYA

CROSSOVER MANGA STAR GETS BACK TO HIS ROOTS

They say you can't go home again. But that's just what manga superstar Kia Asamiya did when he signed on for two new series in his native Japan after concentrating on American comic book icons like Batman and the X-Men in recent years.

The first new title, *Karapuri*, began in Kodansha's *Afternoon* anthology in December. "In many ways, it is the sequel to my old manga series *Compiler*," Asamiya said. "It is a humorous love story drawn in a more comedic style."

Also in December, the *Champion Red* anthology debuted a preview of Asamiya's *JUNK: Record of the Last Hero*,



ASAMIYA

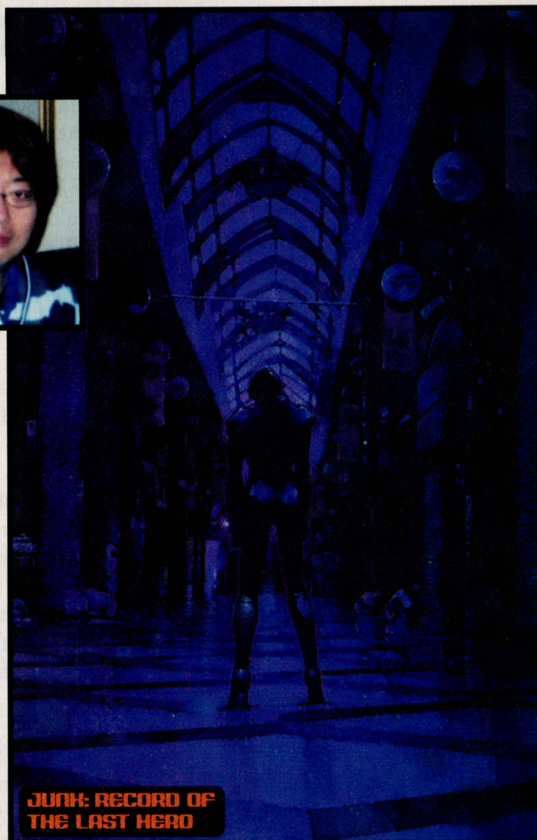
which began as a series the following month.

"This is a hero story, about a reclusive boy who lives his life on the Internet until he inherits mysterious powers one day and his life changes forever," he revealed.

Asamiya said once he commits to a series, he sticks with it. "Sometimes a special project comes along, like the *Hellboy* story

I just finished for Dark Horse, that I will try and squeeze in. But going forward, it is going to have to be something really special to take me away from *JUNK* and *Karapuri*."

Each series will run in monthly installments of about 30 pages apiece. As for if or when *Karapuri* and *JUNK* will see American release, Asamiya commented: "That is all up in the air at this point. I would tend to think they will not come out from DC or Marvel, but from one of the publishers who specialize in manga in the U.S." ■ **Tom Root**



JUNK: RECORD OF THE LAST HERO

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

ANGEL SANCTUARY: THE MANGA VS THE ANIME

Angel Sanctuary is the story of Setsuna and Sara Mudo, teenagers who have enough problems relating to each other without having to deal with the fact that inside Setsuna sleeps the angel Alexiel, whose insane twin Rosiel is out to kill him! The popular manga spawned a short OVA (available from Central Park Media) that leaves much unsaid. But Viz begins releasing the translated manga in March, with several surprises....

WHERE'S RURI?

Not in the OVA. Ruri Saiki, Sara's best friend in the manga, is the ultimate vehicle of Rosiel's awakening. Her closeness to the Mudos allows her to do a stunning amount of damage when Rosiel possesses her.

WICKED GAME

The title "*Angel Sanctuary*" refers



FALLEN ANGELS Sara (left) and Setsuna can't catch a break on DVD or in manga.

to an insidiously popular PC game (called "Digital Angels" in the manga) created to siphon psychic energy from its players—with an added cost. Everyone who plays it dies in a messy splatter on the monitor. Although its energy is used to awaken Rosiel in the manga, it

never appears in the anime.

LET'S GO CRAZY

The Mudos are messed up and only the manga shows the true extent of it. As a young girl, Sara is rescued from a near-assault by Setsuna, who kills her

attacker. Luckily, Sara can be constantly cheerful in the anime because it never happened!

REVIEW TO A KILL

Kira may be Setsuna's best friend, but he's not human, as only the manga fully illustrates. When a slighted demon tears Kira into chunks, it's shocked to see him reappear again. But when you've followed Alexiel through centuries of painful reincarnation, this sort of thing happens all the time.

SEND ME AN ANGEL

Constant torture by family, classmates and a host of angels and demons will really take it out of you. In a manga-only event, Setsuna tries to off himself and is saved by Zaphikiel, the powerful leader of the rebel angels. ■ **Summer Mullins**

COMING COMICS

MANGA TO WATCH FOR THIS SPRING!

MARCH

ANGEL SANCTUARY VOL. 1

Setsuna and Sara Mudo are troubled teens whose lives are going to get much more complicated with the arrival of an evil PC game. Kaori Yuki (Viz, \$9.95)

BATTLE VIXENS VOL. 1

Hakufu's a beautiful yet ditzzy country girl who has an insatiable desire to beat up on people. Little does she know that she's the reincarnation of an ancient Chinese warrior! Yuji Shiozaki (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

B'TX VOL. 2

This may be the end for Teppei and X as they stand alone against one of the Four Spirit Generals. Masami Kurumada (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

BATTLE ROYALE VOL. 6

It's kill or be killed, but a few students don't want to play anymore. Can a band of opposites end the death game without becoming victims? Masayuki Taguchi (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

BOYS OVER FLOWERS VOL. 6

Things are tough for Tsukushi as the F4 guys up the ante on their abuse. Only one manages

to stick up for her—who will it be? Yoko Kamio (Viz, \$9.95)

BUDDHA VOL. 3

Siddhartha's relationship with his nemesis Devadatta relationship is examined in this volume. Osamu Tezuka (Vertical Inc, \$24.95)

THE BUG BOY

A lonely boy tortured by his peers finds comfort with his pets, but a strange insect's sting transforms Sanpei into a poison bug. (Cocoro books, \$9.95)

DARK SIDE BLUES VOL. 1

The Persona Century Corporation rules almost all the world. When a lone figure appears and doesn't want to fall in line, can he assemble a group of rebels to oppose the PCC? Hideyuki Kikuchi (ADV, \$9.99)

DRAGON BALL Z VOL. 15

Piccolo has just one mission: destroy Android 17 and Android 18 before Cell can get to them! Akira Toriyama (Viz, \$7.95)



SILICON SOUL Even computer geniuses like *Nadesico's* Ruri need companionship.

GALAXY ANGEL VOL. 1

Five gorgeous, female space pilots protect their country. With an enemy at every turn, the Angels have lots of problems, including romance. Kanan & Ryo Mizuno (Broccoli, \$9.99)

INUYASHA VOL. 17

Sesshomaru still hungers to gain the use of the Tetsusaiga and Naraku takes advantage of this to suggest an alliance. Rumiko Takahashi (Viz, \$8.95)

LOUIE THE RUNE SOLDIER VOL. 1

Magic, swords, sorcery and insanity are the ingredients for manga fun with bumbling adventurer Louie. Jun Sasameyuki (ADV, \$9.99)

NADESICO VOL. 2

An interstellar battle between Jupiter and Earth leaves the *Nadesico* right in the middle. Kia Asamiya (CPM, \$9.99)

NARUTO VOL. 3

Kakashi subjects Naruto, Sasuke and Sakura through more training in preparation for the battle against the Mist ninjas. Masashi Kishimoto (Viz, \$7.95)

OH MY GODDESS # 106

Can Sora master her fears and compete in the race with friends Keiichi and Belldandy's encouragement, or will she chicken out? Kosuke Fujishima (Dark Horse, \$2.99)

THE RED SNAKE

An unspeakable evil lies within a house in a room that no one enters. The appearance of a

HOT PICK

SAIYUKI VOL. 1

By Kazuya Minekura (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

WHAT IT'S ABOUT A long time ago in Shangri-la, demons and humans lived peacefully together until one day when the peace was shattered. A dark force in India was rising, causing the demons to turn their hatred against mankind. The three guardians of Shangri-la, in order to find out the cause of this evil, send the Buddhist priest Genjo Sanzo to deal with the matter. Along with three unlikely companions (the spirited Goku, ladies' man Gojyo and tranquil Hakkai) and a dragon familiar that can turn into a Jeep, Sanzo will journey to the west and protect Shangri-la at all costs!

WHY IT'S COOL Yet another story based on the Chinese classic *Journey to the West*, Kazuya Minekura amps it up by dragging the characterization into the modern age and turning them all into bishonen. It's hard not to adore Sanzo, Goku, Gojyo and Hakkai—especially since they look so good and kick demon butt so much! The setting of Shangri-la is also a big draw, as Minekura deftly combines modern conveniences like Jeeps and guns with ancient Chinese sensibility such as the conventions of the Buddhist monastery and simple peasant life. *Saiyuki's* an action-packed romp through literary history and yet manages to have some softer moments as well. For fans of the anime from ADV, the manga is a must-have! ■ Trisha L. Sebastian



Kazuya Minekura



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red snake spells death, murder and doom. Hideshi Hino (*cocoro books, \$9.95*)

RUROUNI KENSHIN VOL. 4

Kenshin and his friends take on the Oniwabanshu, the elite former guards of the Edo Castle. Nobuhiro Watsuki (*Viz, \$7.95*)

SLAYERS RETURN

Sorceress Lina Inverse reluctantly joins forces with busty rival Naga the White Serpent to save the world. Hajime Kanzaka & Shoko Yoshinaka (*CPM, \$9.99*)

SUPER MANGA BLAST! #41

Anthology collection of *3x3 Eyes*, *Cannon God Exaxxon*, *Club 9*, *Seraphic Feather*, *Shadow Star*, & *What's Michael?* Various (*Dark Horse, \$5.99*)

THE RULER OF THE LAND VOL. 1

An immature warrior and a woman disguised as a male fighter come together while searching for a man who was the best fighter in the Establishment School. Kook Jin Jeon (*ADV, \$9.99*)

TREASURE HUNTER VOL. 1

Jubei, the world's greatest adventurer, is in search of eternal youth and a mystical statue. Hitoshi Tomizawa (*CPM, \$9.99*)

ULTIMATE MUSCLE VOL. 1

Kid Muscle is the reluctant leader of a band of good-guy wrestlers, determined to save the universe from the evil wrestlers in the D.M.P. Yudetamago (*Viz, \$7.95*)

ULTRAMAN TIGA #8

When Ultraman Tiga's human alter ego is trapped in a holding cell, how will the world fair against alien invaders? Tony Wong, Khoo Fuk Lung & UDON (*Dark Horse, \$3.99*)

APRIL

AQUARIAN AGE: JUVENILE ORION VOL. 2

As Tsukasa learns more about his past, he's terrified what his friend Tomonori will think. Sakurako Gokurakuin & Marekatsu Nakai (*Broccoli, \$9.99*)

ARIA VOL. 1

On the planet Aqua, Akari is new to the land of Neo-VENEZIA, but determined to survive and make it on her own. Kozue Amano (*ADV, \$9.99*)

AZUMANGA DAIOH VOL. 4

Besides studying and learning on the class trip to Okinawa, the gang gets into mischief and trouble. Kiyohiko Azuma (*ADV, \$9.99*)

B.B. EXPLOSION VOL. 1

Determined country girl Airi enrolls in a highly competitive acting school to win a chance to strut her stuff on the "Boom Boom" TV show.

Will she realize her dreams of love and stardom? Yasue Imai (*Viz, \$9.95*)

BERSERK VOL. 3

When the Five God Hands is summoned, even Guts' giant sword may not be enough against it. Kentaro Miura (*Dark Horse, \$12.95*)

BUDDHA VOL. 4

Siddhartha's betrayal in Magadha causes him to examine his beliefs. Osamu Tezuka (*Vertical Inc, \$24.95*)

COMIC PARTY VOL. 1

Indie manga artists create this eclectic series that follows a group of artists and their trials and tribulations trying to create a comic. Various (*CPM, \$9.99*)

DARK ANGEL VOL. 2

Three battles await Dark before he can be accepted as a Phantom Saint. Kia Asamiya (*CPM, \$9.99*)

DI GI CHARAT THEATER VOL. 1

Ghosts, haunted houses, beauty pageants and more await Dejiko in this eclectic mix of tales. Yuki Kiriga & Koge-Donbo (*Broccoli, \$9.99*)

FRUITS BASKET VOL. 2

Can Tohru keep the Sohma family secret from her best friends when they arrive for a sleep-over? Natsuki Takaya (*TOKYOPOP, \$9.99*)

MAGIC KNIGHT RAYEARTH II VOL. 2

Hikaru, Umi and Fuu once again are fighting against impossible odds to keep Cephiro safe. CLAMP (*TOKYOPOP, \$9.99*)

MINK VOL. 1

By mistake, a teen wanting a music CD gets a computer CD that allows her to change into anyone she wants. Megumi Tachikawa (*TOKYOPOP, \$9.99*)

RAHXEPHON VOL. 1

The world has been destroyed in a cataclysmic event, and a few hundred thousand survivors remain...or so Ayato Kamina thinks. Yutaka Izubuchi (*Viz, \$9.95*)

RAIJIN COMICS #44

Contains *Baki The Grappler*, *Blue Sky*, *Bow Wow Wata*, *City Hunter*, *Guardian Angel Getten*, *Keiji*, *Nemuri Kyoshiro* and *Revenge of the Mouflon*. Various (*Gutsoon!, \$5.95*)

SHONEN JUMP #17

Includes *Dragon Ball Z*, *Hikaru no Go*, *Naruto*, *One Piece*, *Shaman King*, *Yu-Gi-Oh!* & *Yu Yu Hakusho*. Various (*Viz, \$4.99*)

TO HEART VOL. 1

Akari's been pals with Hiroyuki and Masashi all her life, but now she has a crush on Hiroyuki. How can the group's friendship survive? Ukyou Takao (*ADV, \$9.99*)

GETTING TO KNOW

TSUTOMU NIHEI



With *Blame!* (pronounced "blahm") having done manga, anime, live-action movie and action figures, it's no wonder American comics company Mar-

vel recruited Nihei to write and draw *Snikt!* for their manga line. Born in Fushima, just outside Tokyo where he now resides, the manga-ka finds himself very busy.

How did *Snikt!* come about?

When [Marvel] approached me, they asked who would I like to draw of the Marvel characters, and I immediately answered, "Wolverine." I came at it from an angle that it was going to be my Wolverine, given his rich history.

Which is more rewarding: American comics or manga?

I've always thought that Japanese and American comics to be graphically the same... but when I saw *Snikt!* as a completed comic, it struck me as a wholly different product at 24 pages, different from various manga titles being published as a whole collection.

What keeps you from your drawing board?

Video games...there were times (I shouldn't say) that I played more games than I worked. The biggest one that took up my time was *Halo*.

What do you do when you blocked and can't create?

I've been a sci-fi fan for many years, and I've read U.S. and other world sci-fi novels, so when I get stuck, I go back to them and that inspires me. Sometimes I just stare at the paper until something comes as well.

What's something no one knows about you?

I don't think people know I'm very cute character-wise. [Laughs] I think my girlfriend knows though.

What other characters would you like to work on next?

Blade. The whole vampire hunter thing just fascinates me. ■ Jim Dewey



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KILLER T.A.T.U.

RUSSIAN POP DUO GETS ANIME MAKOVER

What's got big doe-eyes, sailor uniforms and schoolgirls of ambiguous sexual persuasion? If you guessed the latest anime from Japan, then you only guessed half right—the answer is Russian pop duo t.A.T.u., coming to movie screens soon in their own feature film anime, “t.A.T.u. PARAGATE.”

The movie has a prime creative staff to go with its celebrity talent. Directing will be Norio Kashima of “Dirty Pair” and “Crusher Joe” fame and Susumu Kudo (“Sakura Wars”), with Shinichiro Watanabe, director of the “Cowboy Bebop” TV series and movie, providing the film’s opening sequence. Ivan Shapovalov, the mastermind producer behind the recently disbanded duo, will also be writing new music for the movie, thereby making “PARAGATE” a Russia-Japan co-production.

Pop stars in anime are nothing new to Japan, dating all the way back to Minmei in “Macross” and the more recent “Perfect Blue,” but branching out internationally is a totally fresh idea. “When the CD came out, I saw the sleeve and liked the look of the band,” said the film’s producer, Masahiro Yoshida

of iMOVE, the studio behind the 100 minute movie. “Then I saw the video and it gave me kind of a nostalgic feeling. I thought we could make an anime out of them which would appeal to all ages. They seemed like a natural choice.”

Details of the movie’s plot have yet to be worked out, but Yoshida hopes we’ll get to see t.A.T.u.’s Lena and Yulia slay some monsters along the way. And since the movie is being targeted to audiences of all ages, don’t expect to see much of the scandalous side of the pair’s image. In fact, “paragate” is a Buddhist term meaning “to reach the awakened state,” so the

movie may even have a spiritual angle.

But why are there so many pop singers in Japanese animation in the first place? Yoshida revealed the simple answer: “Pop idols are cute.” “t.A.T.u. PARAGATE” comes out in Japanese and European cinemas in November 2004. U.S. release dates have not yet been set. ■ **Kumar Sivasubramanian**



TATTOOED TO YOU Lena (left) and Yulia barely even need to change their outfits when they make the jump to anime.



THE BUZZ

TINY BITS OF UPCOMING NEWS

THE “CASTLE” MOVES

Citing substantial delays in production, the release date for Studio Ghibli’s next movie, the Hayao Miyazaki-directed “Howl’s Moving Castle,” was moved to November from its original date of July 17. As of January, Ghibli had only just finished completing the 1,400 story boards (just slightly more than their last film, “Spirited Away”).

GATHERING STEAM

Originally scheduled to be released in October 2003, Toho announced that Katsuhiro Otomo’s “Steamboy” will be in theaters this July. The nine-year production is now estimated at costing 2.4 billion yen (approximately \$22.6 million), taking the most expensive anime title away from Studio Ghibli’s “My Neighbors the Yamadas” (see chart on the next page).

NINJA ATTACK

TV Tokyo whipped “Naruto” fans into a frenzy when it announced the release date and title for the fox-ninja’s first movie. Called “Dai Katsugeki!! Yuki Hime Ninpoucho Datteba Yo!” (or “Big Action Movie!! The Ninja Snow Princess!” in English), the movie will be in Japanese theaters on August 21. No further details have been released as of presstime. ■ **TRISHA L. SEBASTIAN**



NARUTO

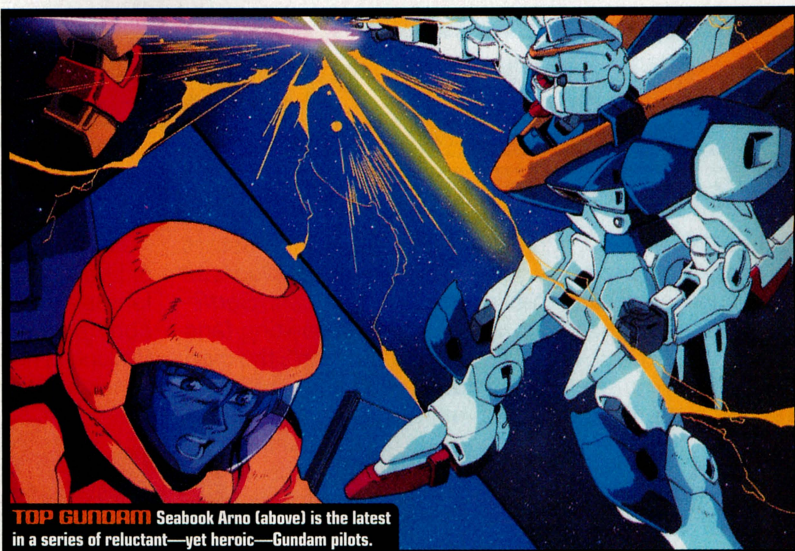
THE TALENTED MR. GUNDAM

'F91' TAKES GUNDAM INTO AMERICAN THEATERS

Just when you thought it was safe to travel in the Gundam universe, another threat has reared its head. Heading to theaters this May is "Mobile Suit Gundam F91," the next movie in Gundam's original Universal Century timeline. Bandai Entertainment marketing manager Jerry Chu urged Gundam fans to catch this movie, saying, "It's a chance for [them] to see what the Gundam franchise is all about on the big screen, not just the small screen."

The setting is Universal Century 0123, three decades after the events chronicled in "Char's Counterattack," when the glory days of the Principality of Zeon are long gone. The Earth Federation has grown lax in that time, which allows for a new outfit known as the Crossbone Vanguard to invade colony Frontier IV and start yet another war. Civilians Seabook Arno and Cecily Fairchild get caught up in the events and eventually discover their family ties to this new conflict. In the midst of all this, the evolutionary strain of humanity called "Newtypes" reemerges.

Originally released in Japan in 1991, the second feature-length animated film in the Gundam franchise marks a reunion between famed Gundam creator/director Yoshiyuki Tomino, original Gundam character designer Yoshikazu Yasuhiko, and omnipresent mecha designer Kunio Okawara.



TOP GUNDAM Seabook Arno (above) is the latest in a series of reluctant—yet heroic—Gundam pilots.

The story isn't bogged down with references to the earlier "Universal Century" Gundam titles. Still, Tomino felt the story worthy enough to follow up with a manga sequel of its own, *Mobile Suit Crossbone Gundam*, several years later.

Be sure to check out the website at www.gundamofficial.com for showing locations and other announcements. ■ **James Kaleta**

JAPAN BOX OFFICE

THE MOST EXPENSIVE ANIME FILMS OF ALL TIME!

RANK & NAME	DIRECTOR	STUDIO	YEAR	SYNOPSIS	BUDGET (in U.S.D.)	BOX OFFICE GROSS
1: "Steamboy"	Katsuhiro Otomo	Sony	2004	A young inventor named Rei gains custody of a mysterious "steam ball" and must protect it against the evil corporation that wants to own it.	\$22.6M*	N/A
2: "My Neighbor The Yamadas"	Isao Takahata	Studio Ghibli	1999	The Yamadas are a typical Japanese family; this film talks a little bit about their daily lives.	\$22.2M	\$10.3M
3: "Princess Mononoke"	Hayao Miyazaki	Studio Ghibli	1997	A boy under the curse of death, a girl who was raised by wolves and a woman on the brink of an industrial revolution clash in an ancient Japan.	\$22.1M	\$156.6M
4: "Ghost in the Shell: Innocence"	Mamoru Oshii	Production I.G.	2004	A cyborg named Batou seeks to regain his humanity.	\$18M*	N/A
5: "Spirited Away"	Hayao Miyazaki	Studio Ghibli	2001	Chihiro's parents were turned into pigs for their greed and she must work at an other-worldly bathhouse to change them back.	\$17.9M	\$250.9M
6: "Metropolis"	Rintaro	Madhouse	2001	Kenichi and his detective uncle plunge into the city known as Metropolis and uncover a large conspiracy.	\$14.1M	**
7: "Akira"	Katsuhiro Otomo	Toho /Tokyo Movie Shinsha	1988	In a post-apocalyptic future, Kaneda must fight for his friend Tetsuo's sanity against the mystery that is Akira.	\$9.4M	\$59.2M
8: "The Wings of Honneamise"	Hirofumi Yamada	Gainax	1987	Alternate universe astronauts in a fledgling space program face triumph and defeat while looking to the stars.	\$8M	**

* Projected budget. ** These numbers have never been released.
Sources: Anime News Network, IMDb, Nausicaa.net, Production I.G.



A NEW 'GENERATION'

ROBOTECH'S THIRD SAGA INVADES!

The "New Generation" is invading—but don't start packing your bags yet. Having pleased *Macross* saga geeks with the release of *Robotech: Battlecry* in 2002, publisher TDK Mediactive is assaulting fans with a brand-new game based on "New Generation", the third Robotech storyline, called *Robotech: Invasion*.

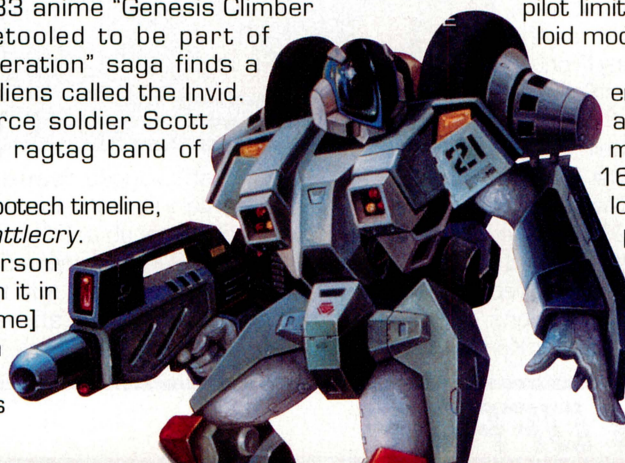
Based on the original 1983 anime "Genesis Climber Mospeada" (which was retooled to be part of "Robotech"), the "New Generation" saga finds a future Earth conquered by aliens called the Invid. Robotech Expeditionary Force soldier Scott Bernard must team with a ragtag band of rebels for Earth's freedom.

Given its later slot in the Robotech timeline, *Invasion* isn't a sequel to *Battlecry*. And instead of a third-person flight/shooter, TDK has taken it in a bold new direction. "[The game] can best be described as a first-person shooter with vehicles," producer Carlos Rodriguez explained.

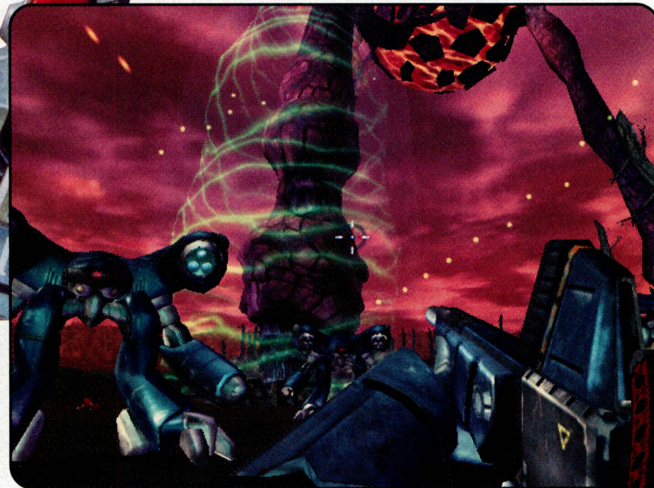
In addition to running on foot with a jam-packed satchel of heavy firearms, *Invasion* will fulfill "New Generation" fans' fantasies by putting them in the Cyclone—wicked personal body armor which transforms into a motorcycle. "The Cyclone is not only a mode of transportation, but it also functions as a highly-sophisticated weapon system that gives the pilot limited flight capability when in Battloid mode," Rodriguez elaborated.

To make the package even more enticing, *Invasion* will feature a huge arsenal of multiplayer options. "The multiplayer mode will allow up to 16 combatants to compete via a local area network (LAN) in a 16-player free-for-all, 8-on-8 team vs. team, and more," Rodriguez said. And that doesn't even include the top secret plans TDK has for online warfare. This *Invasion* is set to begin late 2004, for both PlayStation 2 and Xbox.

■ Jon M. Gibson



INSIDE LOOKING OUT Take a good look at the Cyclone armor above—you won't see it much since you'll be in it.



BITS OF BYTES

THE LATEST WORD ON GAMING

SPRINGTIME FOR YUGI Anime-friendly publisher Konami recently unveiled plans for a number of card-battling releases, including *Yu-Gi-Oh! World Championship Tournament 2004* for Game Boy Advance, *Yu-Gi-Oh! Xbox* (working title) for Xbox, and *Yu-Gi-Oh! Power of Chaos: Kaiba the Revenge* for PC. The trio of games is set to hit stores this spring.

NEVER GOT 'EM ALL Nintendo's now-legendary Pokémon franchise is going back to the past. Fire Red and Green Leaf are both remakes of the original Game Boy releases, with several upgrades: fresh graphics, wireless communication functionality, new characters, a "teaching TV" mode, and a redesigned Pokédex. Expect them this fall.

A NEW KING OF GAMES Yoh is going digital! Konami Digital Entertainment, Inc. has announced they'll be developing *Shaman King* videogames, based on the hit supernatural/action manga currently serialized in *Shonen Jump*. Games for PS2 and GBA are expected sometime Summer 2004. ■ JG

I WILL AVENGE MY SHIRT'S BUTTONS!

SHAMAN KING



'ASTRO'-NOMICAL GAMES

SEGA STEALS TWO TEZUKA CLASSICS FOR PS2

The "God of manga" might be renamed the "God of video games" if Sega has its way. Two new games based on Osamu Tezuka's manga, *Astro Boy* and *Dororo* (although the game has been renamed *Blood Will Tell* for the U.S.) are in production for PlayStation 2.

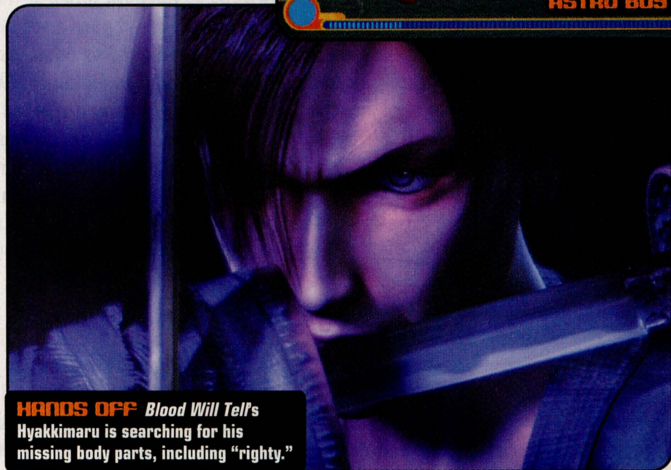
"We have been working extremely closely with Tezuka Productions," said Klayton Vorlick, localization producer at Sega. "Every step of the way, we work with Tezuka to ensure that the games are as authentic as can be, and the characters are true to their original counterparts."

Those expectations are definitely high, considering *Astro Boy* is arguably the most beloved manga ever made, and the new anime hit currently airing in the U.S. on Kids WB! "The game is more closely based on the [new] anime than the original manga," continued Vorlick. "The anime has modernized the story, and the game has done the same. However, the characters themselves—and the heart and soul of the story—are completely intact." Of course, like any complete *Astro Boy* tale, there will be plenty of mid-air action, as the game is designed so Astro can fly anywhere using his rocket feet, while his blaster arm zaps the bad guys.

On the opposite end of Tezuka's manga spectrum, the dark epic *Blood Will Tell* is the tale of a samurai named Hyakkimaru whose organs and limbs are stolen and then replaced with mechanical weapons. Using a sword-arm, and a cannon in his leg, among others, he ventures off on a quest to regain his humanity while protecting a young boy

named Dororo. The game's action takes a *Devil May Cry* approach, with a points-based, combo-intensive fighting system.

Both games are set to debut in Japan this spring, and arrive in America later this year. ■ JG



HANDS OFF *Blood Will Tell*'s Hyakkimaru is searching for his missing body parts, including "righty."

TO IMPORT OR NOT TO IMPORT?

BRING IT!

DUEL MASTERS (GAMECUBE)

PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT

HOW TO PLAY: Just like the anime, this "card-battling sim" pits players against computerized opponents—or other humans, if you seek a true challenge—in frantic, spell-casting battles. For the uninitiated, think of it as a super-stylized, anime version of *Magic: The Gathering* that you can play on your GameCube. And you don't have to buy all those booster packs!

ANALYSIS:

While it's a pretty literal translation of the collectible card game and anime, what makes this GameCube copy of *Duel Masters* ultra-cool is its ability to link up with the freshly released Game Boy Advance version. Via a link cable, exclusive cards can be traded.

SHOBU



KEEP IT!

CHO ANIKI SEINARU PROTEIN DENSETSU (PS2)

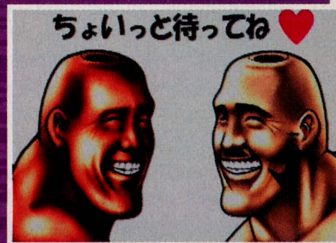
MACHO, MACHO MEN

HOW TO PLAY: Think of the classic shooter *Gradius* with sweaty, oiled-up men in Speedos, because that's exactly what *Protein Densetsu* is—no joke! It's a classic Japanese-style shooter with a very...uh...masculine twist, in which musclemen take the place of spaceships, blasting lasers from rather questionable parts of their body.

ANALYSIS: Here's the scariest thing—*Cho Aniki* is an ongoing franchise overseas, meaning that the original games were so popular that there was demand for this sequel.

While there may be certain people who demand it here in America, it probably won't be enough to bring over this terrifying game, which proves it's a man's life in the space army.

MUSCLE MASSING
It's a man's life in the new *Cho Aniki* game!



RELEASE SCHEDULE

WE PICK 'EM, YOU PLAY 'EM. HERE'S WHAT'S COMING THIS SPRING...

MARCH

CRIMSON SEA 2

The "one-vs.-many" style of play Konami invented with *Dynasty Warriors* evolves in *Crimson Sea 2*. Gamers are pitted against futuristic aquatic enemies and assorted giant bugs all in the name of saving the world. (Koei, PS2)

CY GIRLS

Think of these Cy Girls as the anime equivalent of Dirty Harry—attitude-soaked, trigger-happy, and out to get the bad guy at any cost. As either Ice or Aska, you'll take on an evil syndicate using an array of slick weaponry and martial arts maneuvers in this frenetic action romp. (Konami, PS2)

DEAD OR ALIVE: ULTIMATE COLLECTION VOL. 1

It's a fine two-pack of the original *Dead or Alive* and its sequel, *Dead or Alive 2*. Spruced up with a slew of kinky new costumes. The best part: Xbox Live compatibility, allowing you to kick your buddy's ass from 4,000 miles away. (Tecmo, Xbox)

DRAKENGARD

Players will control former prince Caim and his partner-in-war, a feisty red dragon. Both are wounded, but together they become an

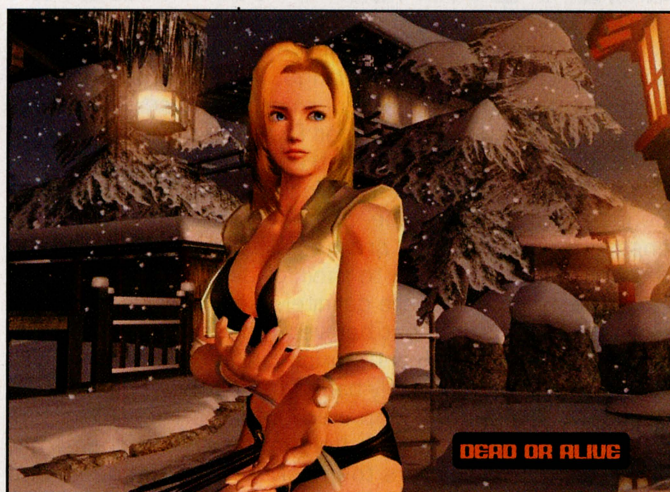
unstoppable fighting machine, driven to save their homeland from invasion via aerial and melee modes of combat. (Square Enix, PS2)

FINAL FANTASY XI

Darn it! Just when we make some unbelievable game a Hot Pick, it goes and gets delayed on us. Hopefully you'll enjoy *FFXI* this March, along with several thousand other people in this MMORPG, featuring tons of new Summons, a handful of new races, and the ability to play with PC or PS2 users worldwide. (Square Enix, PS2)

FIREFIGHTER F.D. 18

The heat is on as you jump in a protective suit and attempt to keep buildings and the folks in 'em from going up in smoke. Battle a nefarious arsonist and find a bit of romance in this story-driven game. (Konami, PS2)



HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE

This latest installment brings over 40 new characters, and a new "event" system spanning over 30 years. That's right; you'll spend a lifetime raising livestock, picking corn, and more in this *Animal Crossing*-like sim for the inspired farmer inside all of us. (Natsume, GameCube)

MARIO GOLF: ADVANCE TOUR

Hot on the heels of his next-gen golfing debut, *Advance Tour* packs plenty of 18-hole courses to take on the road, complete with Mario-specific hazards like the Chomp Chain. (Nintendo, GBA)

MEGAMAN: ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION

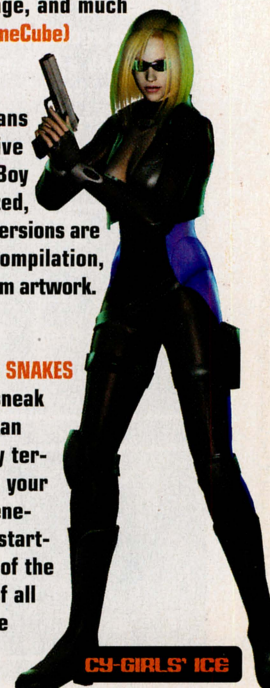
Stuffed full with *Mega Man 1* through *8* (spanning NES, SNES, Game Boy, and PS One), two never-before-released-in-the-U.S. arcade romps, as well as unlockable art, producer interviews, 30 minutes of anime footage, and much more. (Capcom, PS2, GameCube)

MEGAMAN MANIA

This ensemble hooks fans up with the original five black-and-white Game Boy riffs. Thankfully, colorized, graphically ramped-up versions are also available in this compilation, as well as tons of museum artwork. (Capcom, GBA)

METAL GEAR SOLID: TWIN SNAKES

As Solid Snake, try to sneak unnoticed into an Alaskan military base overrun by terrorists in order to stop your twin brother and his renege operatives from starting World War III. One of the greatest video games of all time, the original PSOne *Metal Gear Solid* gets

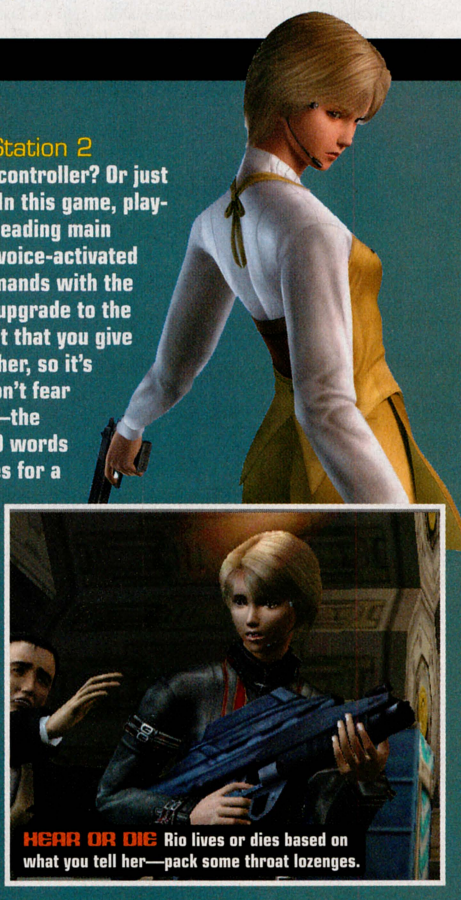


HOT PICK

LIFELINE

Due in March from Konami on PlayStation 2. Hands tired? Don't want to hold that clunky controller? Or just want a truly innovative game? Find *Lifeline*. In this game, players ditch the directional pad for a headset, leading main heroine Rio through the world's first-ever "voice-activated action-adventure" entirely with verbal commands with the PS2 microphone/headset. It's really just an upgrade to the *Resident Evil* survival-horror formula, except that you give advice to the heroine instead of controlling her, so it's truly up to you whether she lives or dies. Don't fear about clunky technology getting in the way—the game has the ability to recognize over 5,000 words and—get this—a whopping 100,000 phrases for a true revolution in gameplay.

Set in 2029 in a space hotel orbiting Earth, the setup has Rio, the only known survivor of an attack on the station, attempting to get out of the intergalactic resort alive. You guide Rio via a microphone and watching her through security cameras. But her path to freedom isn't a safe one; she'll constantly be meeting up with tons of mutant foes, from giant spider-like creatures to more irritating alien leeches. Knowing when to scream "Shoot!", yell "Run!" or holler "Dodge and reload!" will save your life, so this adventure isn't for the anti-social, non-communicative breed of gamer. ■ JG



HEAR OR DIE Rio lives or dies based on what you tell her—pack some throat lozenges.



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HOT TIPS

SECRETS FOR THE BEST GAMERS ONLY



0B2: BUDOKAI 2

DRAGON BALL Z BUDOKAI 2 (PS2)

Are you a lazy Z Warrior? Don't want the hassle of earning Zeni to buy your skill capsules? After you enter the capsule store (you'll know it because you'll see

Bulma), hit triangle to exit. While Bulma says "Buy it next time, okay?" hit R1, R2, L1 and L2 simultaneously and hit X to fully exit. You'll randomly get new capsules in your inventory!

F-ZERO GX (GAMECUBE)

Tired of all those repetitive music tracks? To unlock a remixed "Big Blue" song, select Customization mode and enter the shop. Press Z, Left, Right, Left, Z, V, X, Z, Left, Right, Left, Right, Z, X, Z, X, Z at the main menu screen. A noise will confirm you entered the code correctly, and the "Sounds of Big Blue" track will be available for purchase at the shop. Or you can just win all the cups on "Master" difficulty. Or maybe not.



F-ZERO



FFX-2

FINAL FANTASY X-2 (PS2)

Want unlimited—but not easy—money? You have to pay off O'aka's 100,000 gil debt by the end of Chapter 2. In Chapter 5, he'll open his own shop at the Travel Agency selling goods at discount prices.

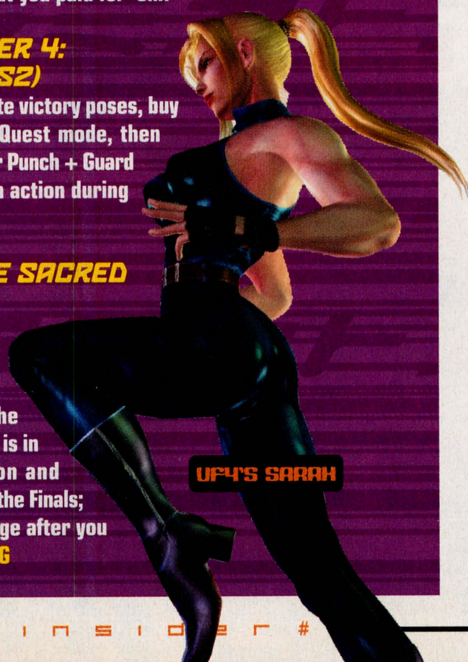
Most of 'em, when you sell 'em back to other shopkeepers, are worth more than what you paid for 'em!

VIRTUA FIGHTER 4: EVOLUTION (PS2)

To view some alternate victory poses, buy them in the shop in Quest mode, then hold Punch + Guard or Punch + Guard + D-Pad to see 'em in action during Replay mode.

YU-GI-OH! THE SACRED CARDS (GBA)

Looking for more masters to duel? Find these rare hunters here: Arkana is in the storage room; Exodia is in the graveyard; Odion and Marik are hanging at the Finals; Strings is at the bridge after you Duel with Kaiba. ■ JG



VF4'S SARAH

new gameplay features, a visual upgrade and bonus cinematics for its GameCube debut. (Konami, GameCube)

ONIMUSHA: BLADE WARRIORS

It's like the *Resident Evil* spin-offs that Capcom cashed-in on, only setting the action in feudal Japan instead of a zombie-infested mansion. Inspired heavily by *Street Fighter*, this 2D brawler lets you face off with friends in the Onimusha universe. (Capcom, PS2)

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE: EPISODE III - C.A.R.D. REVOLUTION

Veering far from the formula of the original two *Phantasy Star Online* games, *Episode III* ventures into *Magic: The Gathering* turf. Using a card-based combat system, players can summon monsters or attack depending on what they've got in their hand, both online and offline. (SEGA, GameCube)

POKÉMON COLOSSEUM

In this sequel to the N64's Stadium battle series, *Colosseum* lets players upload over 200 Pokémon from their *Ruby* and *Sapphire* Game Boy Advances cartridges via the link cable. The result is nearly endless combat combinations. (Nintendo, GameCube)

RESIDENT EVIL: OUTBREAK

The *Resident Evil* series moves online! Eight players join together to flee zombie-infested Raccoon City; whether you work together (good idea) or apart (bad idea) is your choice. Each player has their own specialty, whether it's healing or owning a gun. But the best part is if you're eaten, you can play as a zombie and eat your ex-teammates! (Capcom, PS2)

SAMURAI WARRIORS

Take Koei's two best franchises—the beat 'em up *Dynasty Warriors* and strategy masterpiece *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*—and wonder why Koei never combined them before. *Samurai Warriors* features Japanese warlords, ninja and samurai armies for a truly strategic fighter. (Koei, PS2)

TENCHU: RETURN FROM DARKNESS

Even if you clanged katanas on the PS2 version of *Tenchu*, this Xbox edition is chock-full of upgrades. Two exclusive single-player missions—through a samurai mansion and a pagoda temple—are just the beginning; via Xbox Live, ninja-in-training can log online and toss shuriken at buddies. (Activision, Xbox)

APRIL

DIGIMON: START YOUR ENGINES!

This *Digimon*-themed cart racer features the ability to "digi-volve" while burning rubber, giving you an extra boost in speed—and possibly a few other surprises. With 15 tracks, tons of popular creatures from the show, and the ability to go head-to-head against up to three friends. (Bandai, GBA)

GRADIUS V

The Vic Viper spaceship makes a comeback in this hyper-cool, side-scrolling shooter. A mesh of 2D gameplay and pseudo-3D visuals, this fifth installment of the long-running series is an arcade geek's dream come true, complete with plenty of new weapons and mechanics. (Konami, PS2)

SACRED

Sacred looks to be one of the most open-ended adventures to come out in some time. With 16 regions, a real-time weather system, and even the ability to forge your own armor, this fantasy RPG rivals *Everquest* and *Final Fantasy XI* in vastness—even though it's mostly an offline experience. (Encore, PC)



RESIDENT EVIL: OUTBREAK

EXCLUSIVE MAGE KNIGHT

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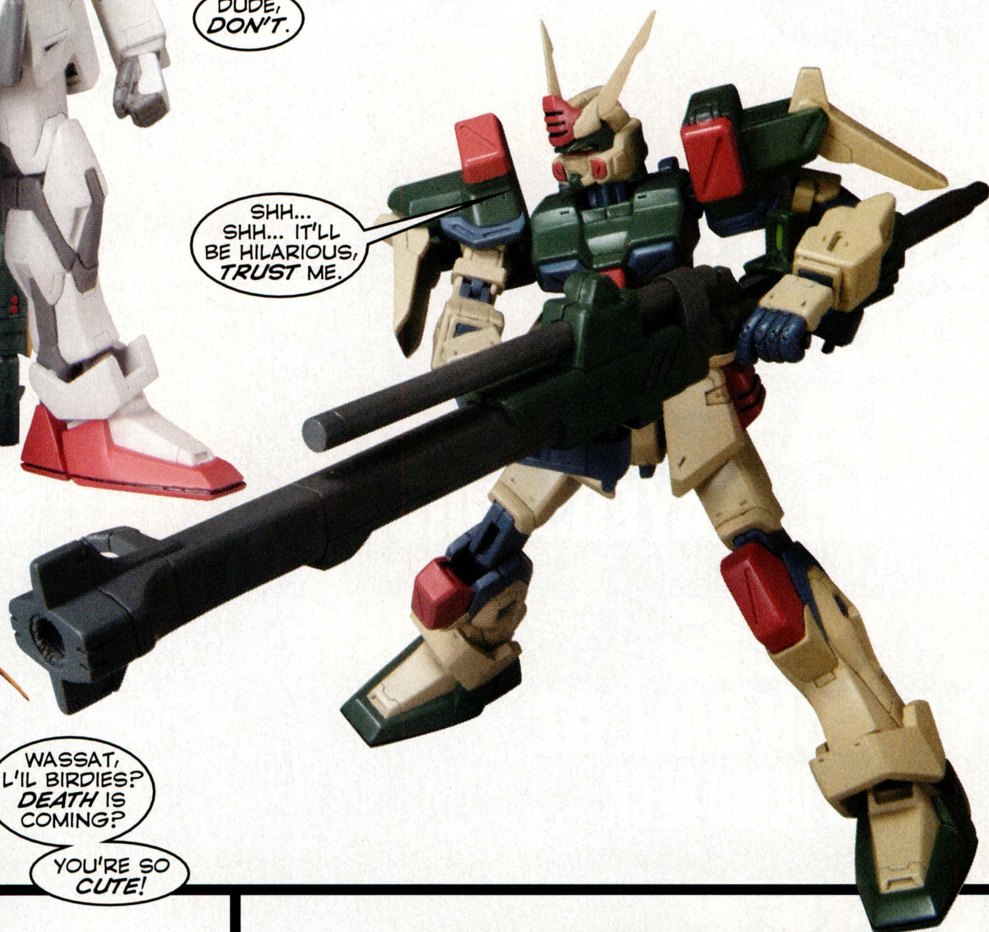
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YOU'RE SO
CUTE!

Spring's around the corner, so it's time to break out the shorts and, in Naru's case, the micro-mini skirts and boots! After that winter chill, the new "Love Hina" Naru in Yellow 1/6 Scale Resin Statue is lookin' good—plus, with only 600 pieces out there, the \$149 price tag's pretty attractive, too!

www.tokyoumint.com

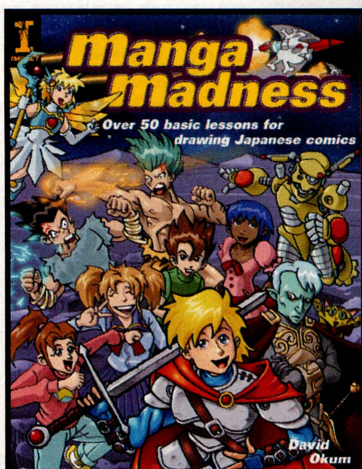
With the new "Dragon Ball Z" Super Saiyan Goku Controller for the PS2, you not only get a gorgeous image of Goku with a nifty Dragon Ball button layout, but dual analogue thumb sticks and a built-in turbo action function, for just \$24.99! Plus, when the new Rumble feature is active, Goku lights up!

www.nubytch.com



MASTERING MANGA

There are many out there, but only one anime drawing guide compiles the basics into one massive volume, *Manga Madness: Over 50 Basic Lessons for Drawing Japanese Comics*, for only \$19.99! Draw mechs and people—but also learn how to compose layouts, basic kanji for sound effects, and about the business of making manga! www.fwpublications.com



FLIGHTS OF FANTASY

From Espers to Guardian Forces, you know them as the big, bad, and devastatingly powerful demigods throughout the entire *Final Fantasy* video game series. These *Final Fantasy* Creature Mini-Figures' first series of 2-packed Cerberus, Yunaesca, Diamond Weapon, Seymore Evolution, Bahamut Zero, and Death Gaze figures are beautifully sculpted yet terrible to behold, at just \$7.99 a pair!



HOT PICK

'FLCL' ACTION FIGURES

Straight from "FLCL" come the craziest, coolest action figures around. Forget boring old Naota—Haruko Haruhara and sidekick robot Canti are why we really watch the show. Haruko comes with her own Vespa scooter, bass guitar and case, while Canti's got a stunning 17 points of articulation and a variant hand, only for \$15.99 each from Kaiyodo!



LET'S GET DUELING

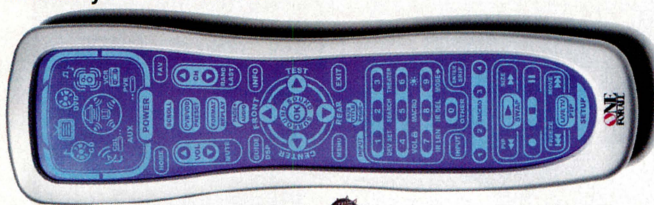
Duel Masters Trading Card Game is ready for a massive U.S. invasion! A great way to refine old techniques or introduce younger siblings to the world of CCGs, *Duel Masters* also comes with

a cool mini-comic in each Starter Set for \$9.99 (boosters are \$3.49 each). Also, an exclusive playable promo card will be packaged with copies of the *Duel Masters* #4 comic from Dreamwave Productions. www.duelmasters.com



TAKE CONTROL!

Between the TV and DVD players and stereo systems and more, how do you keep track of which remote control does what? You get rid of them, of course! The Kameleon 8 simplifies everything you need to run your home entertainment devices into a single remote control, for only \$99. Keep track of buttons you need with keys that light up depending on which device you're using, all in a sleek ergonomic design! www.mykameleon.com



JUST FOR KILLS

With more Japanese pop culture references than any other movie, we knew right away that Quentin Tarantino's "Kill Bill" deserved its own line of action figures. The dream has come true! The first wave includes The Bride, Go Go Yubari, O-Ren Ishii, and of course, the Crazy 88 Fighters, each with stunning likenesses and tons of cool accessories! www.necaonline.com



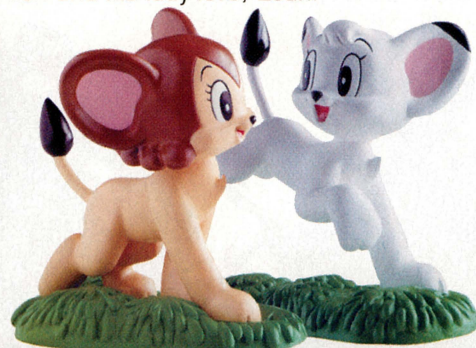
AN ARMITAGE AND A LEG

While investigating a plot on Earth, Naomi Armitage discovers clones of herself. Now you can own this "Armitage: Dual Matrix" Naomi 8-Inch Doll clone, for only \$15! Sculpted like an action figure by Shun Tanabe, but with real cloth clothes, this articulated doll (limited to 3,000) is both a great toy and a collector's item! www.toynami.com



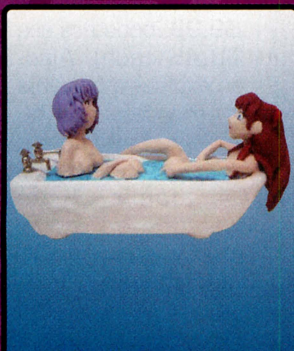
THE ORIGINAL LION KING

Decades before Simba came onto the scene, Kimba was the real ruler of the jungle. He can rule your anime collection as a "Kimba the White Lion" Resin Statue. Limited to only 1,000 pieces and imported from Italy at \$99, this beautiful collectible features the young lion and his lady love, Leah!



"SOLD" ONLINE

SOME OF THE CRAZY CRAP PEOPLE ARE SELLING ON THE 'NET



ASUKA & REI EVANGELION ORIGINAL SCULPTURE
They're squeaky clean, but we feel dirty. \$70.00



FATAL FURY MAI SHIRANUI RESIN KIT DIORAMA
The price is a little over the top, just like her. \$600.00



PRINCESS MONONOKE CUSTOM ANIME COSTUME
Spit blood at your friends in style. \$95.00



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It's the month for mini-figures, with these great-looking 2-pack "Berserk" Mini-Figures! At only 4" tall and for \$12.99, you can conquer these great figures of the Black Swordsman and the Skeleton Knight, and whether you're a fan of the popular anime or manga, each are both highly collectible and beautifully rendered! www.toycom.net



HOT OFF THE STREET

With over a dozen video game incarnations, Street Fighter continues to be a best-seller, so why should these new *Street Fighter 2* Mini-Figures be any different? Chun-Li and Cammy are both rarin' to go in these beautifully sculpted action poses (three each!), and both for only \$5.99 each!



IT'S GOING... GOING...GUN!

Fans of "Trigun" creator Yasuhiro Nightow's work have plenty to celebrate about, what with the mega-popular series, manga and *Gungrave* PS2 videogame! The new *Gungrave: Official Format Archives*, for \$50.99, documents the game from creation and marketing, along with awesome illustrations and design work, with a bonus poster! www.red-entertainment.net



THANKS, JAPAN!

GOODIES SO BIZARRE, YOU GOTTA GO TO ASIA FOR 'EM

PANDA PARADE

Meet the coolest toy ever made! A parody of the popular Go Nagai series "Mazinger Z," the ultra-cool Pandakaiser has a mini panda pilot sitting in his noggin, ready to crush all enemies in his fuzzy paws!



SCREEN CLEAN

Cellphones in Japan have large viewscreens for their internal digital cameras and advanced games. Keep that big screen clean with this Ayupan (J-pop star Ayumi Hamasaki's mascot) cellphone screen cleaner.



CANDID CAMERA

"Mobile Suit Gundam" has always been known for its fantastic hi-tech mech designs, but now the future is literally in your hands with these mini digital video cameras, designed in Earth Federation or Principality of Zeon styles.



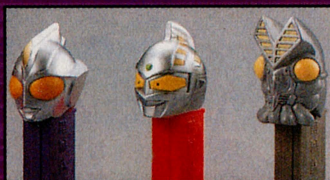
PIG PENNED

He's grumpy, he's cute, he's a pig with a purpose. This plush version of Saizou, everyone's favorite grouchy pig from "Peacemaker Kurogane," is actually a monitor cleaner. He doesn't look happy about it, but neither would you if your butt was being used to wipe dust.



ULTRA TASTY!

What's cooler than giant monsters? Sucking sugar straight from their necks, of course! And you can do just that with this line of "Ultraman" mini Pez dispensers.
■ Miguel A.E. Betita & Jenni Bomford



MANO AMANO

Yoshitaka Amano's designs in *Vampire Hunter D* and the early *Final Fantasy* games are familiar to most of us. Now in *The Complete Works of Yoshitaka Amano* (\$24.95), he proves himself a breathtaking printmaker, drawing from influences like Art Nouveau, American comics and Japanese ukiyo-e!



www.harpercollins.com

ROLL WITH IT, BABY

Who can resist the "Di Gi Charat" mascots—Dejiko, Puchiko, Rabi-en~Rose, and Piyoko? More importantly, who can resist the "Di Gi Charat" Rolling Stamp 4-Piece Sets for \$26? Each character sits on a different colored base, and are self-inking cylinders—perfect for making cute borders and designs on just about anything! www.animegamers.com



NEXT ISSUE COMING TO

WIZARD

ANIME **INSIDER**

#14

PREVIEW
12-PAGES OF
TRIGUN
MAXIMUM MANGA

MEET
WOLF'S RAIN
DIRECTOR TENSAI
OKAMURA

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INSIDER PROFILE

ICHISE FROM 'TEKHNOLYZE'



LIFETIME WARRANTY

Ichise's mechanical arm and leg aren't just replacements. The power of Tekhnolyze gives him super human strength and speed.

PROPHET AND GUIDE

After a mysterious girl (above) named Ren saves Ichise's life, he decides to protect her in gratitude. But Ren later regrets saving him when she foresees the destruction he'll bring.

DRESSED TO KILL

When Ichise joins the Organo organization, his new boss asks him to ditch his trashy street clothes for nicer threads. A fashion plate Ichise isn't; he doesn't even know the word for "tie"!

BARE ESSENTIALS

Ichise spends most of episodes 3 and 4 naked, as Onishi's doctor finds the hurt and limbless boy, brings him to a lab and attaches his new arm and leg. Just thought you should be aware.

THE QUIET MAN

While Ichise's prone to attacking first and not asking any questions at all, "Tekhnolyze" isn't a talky series. Over ten minutes pass in the first episode before anyone speaks at all!

ORIGIN: Young Ichise's life was already filled with woe when his father was hung for illegally smuggling Lafia, a rare material vital in the construction and maintenance of mechanical limbs called Tekhnolyze. When his mother died shortly afterwards from grief and illness, Ichise turned to boxing as his only means of survival, but even this would be denied from him when Aida, his boxing promotor, ordered his arm cut off! A powerful benefactor named Kaego Onishi pays to have his limbs replaced with Tekhnolyzed ones, but Ichise soon learns that every gift comes with a price...

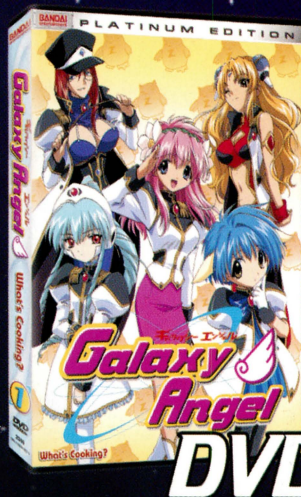
NOW APPEARING: If you want a dark, moody series with almost no dialogue, harsh situations, haunting themes and some of the best art direction out there, see "Tekhnolyze" now. The bleak yet beautiful "Tekhnolyze" comes from the skewed creative genius of Yoshitoshi ABe ("Serial Experiments Lain," "Haibane Renmei"), who designed the characters, and was art-directed by Hidetoshi Kaneko of "Trigun" fame.

Geneon Entertainment has recently announced that the first volume of "Tekhnolyze" will hit the shelves on April 6, with or without a bleak yet beautiful artbox.



ギャラクシーエンジェル Galaxy Angel

Saving the galaxy..
one planet at a time!



DVD

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- Limited Quantities

Collector's Edition SRP: \$39.98

- Collector's Art Box
- Galaxy Angel Pencil Board Collection

Standard Edition SRP: \$29.98

Street Date: 3.16.2004

**Limited Edition Includes
Galaxy Angel Figure Collection**



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Manga

Volume 1 SRP: \$9.99

- Character Profiles
- Four page color insert

Street Date: March 2004

Volume 2 SRP: \$9.99

- Character Profiles
- Four page color insert
- Bonus manga by Kanan

Street Date: May 2004

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BATTLE OVER THE SKIES

HUMANITY HANGING IN THE BALANCE

Street Date: 2/17/04

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